

**CENTRAL EUROPEAN
POLITICAL SCIENCE
REVIEW**

**2020
Summer**

Quarterly of Central European Political Science Alliance

**Volume: 21
Number: 80**

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AND LAW

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INTRODUCTION

The **21st volume 80th** issue of the **Central European Political Science Review (CEPSR)** treats the topic of **THE LOGICAL STRUCTURES OF PHILOSOPHY AND LAW**.

The Nobel Prize winner **John C. Harsanyi**, he acquired his doctorate in philosophy with “summa cum laude” qualification on June 28, 1947, at the Faculty of Humanities at Pázmány University of Budapest. The title of his doctorate was: “The Logical Structure of Philosophical Mistakes”. The manuscript of dissertation never was published, neither in Hungarian nor in English. We have now the honour to publish the whole dissertation of the “King of Game Theory” for the first time in current issue of **CEPSR**. Harsányi was born 100 years ago and died 20 years ago.

The **80th** number of **CEPSR** contains mostly theoretical articles about the law and way of thinking and case studies. We publish chapters of internationally good standing authors, professors of law, sociology and political science. The feedback of our readers points to the fact that during the last 21 years the **CEPSR** established its professional reputation among the scholars of social sciences.

The main reason for publishing the **Central European Political Science Review** is supporting the thoughts of Central Europeanism, the humanism and the value of freedom. For this way, **CEPSR** can contribute to the strengthening of the relationship and understanding of between the researchers and intellectuals of our Central European region.

We invites all research, review articles, short communication in the areas of social science and culture more, and relevant fields.

János Simon
Editor-in-chief

John C. Harsanyi

The Logical Structure of Philosophical Errors

Master of Arts Dissertation,

Budapest, 1947.

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Chapter I: The peculiar nature of philosophical errors

Errors, of course, occur in the areas of disciplines as well as in everyday life. But these errors are sooner or later recognized and exposed, and – most importantly – once they are recognized and exposed, they are essentially rendered harmless, at least for those versed in the respective discipline and who understand the subject in question. Incorrect historical data, experimental error, computational error (whether it is a common addition mistake or an incorrectly solved complicated integration task) cannot be further protected in good faith once the error has been pointed out. It does not happen this way in philosophy. We rarely hear examples of one philosopher convincing another with rational arguments. It is easy to see that the vast majority of opposing philosophical theories must be false, since among a set of opposing conceptions at most one can be true.¹ Nevertheless, we still observe that for millennia (since most philosophical positions are essentially thousands of years old), no philosophical conception has been able to defeat its opposing positions durably.

In philosophy, we are faced with the odd phenomenon that the argument one group of people accepts as unconditionally convincing is called an easily refutable sophism by others. This is achieved not by reference to some irrational source of knowledge (philosophical systems which refer to such uncontrollable irrational cognition is now being ignored), but in the name of a common human mind to all of us.

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What is the reason for this? One reason, in any case, is that almost all philosophical problems have strong emotional prejudices and subjective judgments attached to them.

The expert is usually lead only by some higher level of curiosity. Maybe for a spiritual need, it is a solution to the problem he is working on, but it is not a spiritual need to find a solution to the problem in that particular direction. For emotional reasons, none of the solutions on offer are nicer to him than the other.

The situation is different for a philosopher. The philosopher cannot be emotionally indifferent to his problems. After all, he deals

¹ This does not preclude that correct particular-statements can occur in each system. In this sense, the notion can be true that every philosophical system sees the world from only one side, but from this one side it sees it correctly. But obviously, only details of two conflicting systems can be true at once if they are not in contradiction.

with problems that are most closely related to his religious, moral, political, and aesthetic sympathies and antipathies. The philosopher is aware that his position — at least de jure, if not always de facto — has serious practical consequences; that his resolution might oblige him to radically change his whole way of life, perhaps the way of life of society as a whole.

However, this is not the complete reason. The emotional theory of philosophical error — which traces philosophical errors back solely to emotional factors — is wrong. Unless there were particular material difficulties in the philosophical problems themselves, subjective emotions and judgments could hardly influence the views of thinkers of sharp and disciplined judgment as those of the great philosophers of the past and present, regardless of their possible philosophical errors.

After all, there are problems that are emotionally burdened or dependent on value judgment in more than one field of science. Yet these are more or less clearly decided (except for the final basic questions of the sciences, but these are in fact philosophical problems, and so it is not surprising that they must share the fate of the latter). With this, of course, we do not want to deny that the emotional background often causes mistakes in the disciplines as well and leads to arbitrary selection of facts or hasty conclusions. The only difference is that these mistakes, if I may say so, listen to the clever word: they can be overcome with rational reasoning.

Practitioners are also wrong (and “accidentally” they are mistaken for their own worldview), but if someone, or perhaps a researcher with the opposite worldview, proves that they are wrong, they will have to revise their position sooner or later, whether they like it or not.

Interestingly, Erich Rothacker shows how representatives of warring worldviews are increasingly forced to accept each other’s perspectives, so that today each worldview, involuntarily, is “plastic”, that is, from several sides at the same time, both from its own side and its opponents — the world. We can see this in a borderline case (although this would no longer be acknowledged by Rothacker himself, who is a Diltheyan and thus a relativist) that the different positions differ only in their emotional emphasis, but their subject matter is almost the same. “There is A — although it’s true that B is also there,” says one. “On the contrary, there is B — although I do not deny that there is also A,” the other replies, pretending to have said substantially different things now than his worldview opponent.

For example, the Renaissance and Reformation was about blackening the Middle Ages as much as it could. The Counter-Reformation, on the other hand, sought to protect the Splendor of the Catholic Church. But those proved facts that the previous age had collected as an accusation against the Middle Ages could not be denied by the Counter-Reformation historiography either, for its part it sought to extract more counter-data from the sources and contrast it with the values of the Middle Ages. The historians of the Enlightenment, on the other hand, again specialized in the chronicle scandaleuse of the Middle Ages, but they were also forced to accept the results of the medieval-friendly collection of material of the previous age. Then Romanticism again idealized the Middle Ages, but, characteristically, they could not escape the influence of the contradictory data of the encyclopedists (Romantic historiography was just trying to show that after all, its much-loved, kind Middle Ages, etc., was a great era). The result is simply that we know quite a lot about the Middle Ages — both pro-medieval and anti-medieval: both good and bad. At most, one party highlights these traits, the other, those, but neither party can ignore the other side of the coin as long as the debate remains at the scientific level.²

The human intellect is thus quite capable of looking beyond its emotional blinders — provided that it is supported by sufficiently strong evidence from the side of the object under investigation (and provided, of course, that there is a serious pursuit of objective truth).

But the history of philosophy itself shows good examples of this. We do not know of a philosopher who, almost against his will, overcome just by the “clarity” of arguments, accepted a certain standpoint. (Whether the arguments that convinced this or that philosopher, against his will, are really so convincing, or simply that philosopher did not find the right counter-argument against them, even though they may have become quite obvious — let us not analyse it now.) Obviously, this must be examined separately in each case, with the outcome of the examination depending on the worldview of the researcher conducting the study. And as far as it is possible, we

² Of course, historians no longer agree that, for example, whether the religiosity of the Middle Ages is a virtue or a mistake. But this is not a historical question, but a philosophical problem. But regardless of worldview, it is clearly decidable for example the question of how the high degree of religiosity of the Middle Ages facilitated and hindered the development of the sciences. Of course, it is again a matter of worldview, whether if it turns out that this religiosity has somewhat hindered the development of the sciences, is it worth while for the sciences to be pushed into a temporary background for the sake of the flourishing of religious life, and so on.

— because it is impossible to do it perfectly — try to abstain from all worldview attitudes of mind and to remain on a purely logical (epistemological) level. It is enough for us now that material evidence, and even the appearance of it, can overcome the resistance of emotions — if this (real or apparent) evidence is rather strong.

I would like to refer to two typical examples here. One is the case of an atheist, who under the influence of rational arguments is forced or reluctant to accept the existence of God: without being emotionally satisfied with his new theistic worldview, at least for the time being — moreover, he may even feel burdened because of the inherent moral obligations. This is the well-known case from convertists-autobiographies.

The other example belongs to a man who has received a religious upbringing, but who lost his faith later under the influence of the philosophical position and arguments of his milieu, but emotionally always longs for his childhood religious worldview. There are many examples of this among the French Romantics in the first half of the 19th century.*

*Imre Madách expresses a similar mood in the London scene (XI. Scene) in *The Tragedy of Man*:

LUCIFER: You're a convert, I see — a real pietist.

*ADAM: You miss the point, my own heart may be cold
But that's my business: for her sake I would wish
Her maiden heart to overrun with faith,
With sacred verse, the music of the past
And all the immaculate virgin bloom of flowers.*

(The emphasis comes from me.)

Therefore, one will not always be a theistic or an atheist on an emotional basis — we must disregard the supernatural forces now — and even not once, despite emotions. I do not want to deny that in such cases there may be unconscious emotional motives behind the change of worldview. Perhaps it only gives the appearance that the attitude of mind was created in spite of all the emotions of the subject, that only the emotions working against the attitude of mind become conscious, while the operation of the emotions in the subject's favor remains unconscious. But even in such circumstances, precisely because of the division of emotional life, it can hardly be the decisive word for emotions alone at the time of the attitude of mind.

A similar result is obtained when we examine the developmental laws of philosophical positions and schools. An emotional factor is hardly more strongly influenced by a philosophical stance than the disciples' loyalty to the Master and his school. In this feeling converge the psychological and sociological forces that influence, if at all, the emotional behavior of philosophers. A school of philosophy is usually built up of people with a similar habitus, social status, education, political affiliation, for whom allegiance to the founding Master is synonymous with their habitus, their social group, traditions, political ideals, and possibly to religion. (Bacon rightly considered "idola theater", the prejudices of science schools to be one of the main emotional motives for philosophical errors.) And yet, the disciples of a great philosopher, in spite of all their efforts, are unable to permanently cling to their Master's letter if the development of spiritual life has surpassed their Master. First of all, it is the development of the disciplines that no school of philosophy can permanently ignore. There is no longer a deep-seated Scholasticus who wants to hold on to the scientific worldview of the Middle Ages. Since the discovery of non-Euclidean geometries, there has been no orthodox neo-Kantian who would regard the theorems of Euclidean geometry in advance as synthetic judgments, in the Kantian sense. No New Hegelian could consider world history as a single upward line of development in the Hegelian way, but — at least in parallel, coexisting — is forced to recognize each cultural circle as an independent line of development, and so on. The position of 'Umso schlimmer für die Tatsachen' is, for a longer period, simply a psychological impossibility.

In addition, each philosophical system shows an immanent development independent of external stimuli, primarily those systems that originally suffered from conspicuous internal contradictions. In such a case, the respect for the Master cannot hold the disciples back from trying to eliminate these contradictions, even at the cost of a fundamental transformation of the system. This was the fate of for example the Kantian system, or earlier, the Descartes system.

The bold objective evidence, such as in the previous examples, supported the factual findings of the disciplines or the principle of contradiction, can indeed combat the strong emotional prejudice of philosophers, such as adherence to the teachings of the school and of the Master. Emotional bias — how great a power in the human soul

— cannot yet deprive a person of his or her rational judgment against sufficiently obvious (philosophical or non-philosophical) facts.

Thus, if the logical value of arguments in the field of philosophy is judged so differently by different philosophers, that objectively incorrect arguments cannot be made obvious to everyone, but even objectively incorrect arguments may seem perfectly convincing to many, then this can only come from the object-logical nature of the philosophical arguments themselves.

The opposite view of the value of philosophical arguments, which makes their effective application so difficult, stems not only from people's subjective reluctance to these arguments for emotional reasons, but must, at least in part, stem from the objective logical difficulties of philosophical reasoning itself.

Which logical moment of philosophical arguments causes this uncertainty in their judgment? From which logical moment do false philosophical positions arise?

Each argumentation consists of two factors: a premise (*praemissa*) and a form of inference (*forma ratiocinandi*). The antecedents themselves may be items in need of apodictical proof: but we must stop somewhere (*ἀνάγκη στῆναι*), we must arrive at directly obvious basic items that do not need to be proved.

The complete argumentation also includes the inference steps by which we prove the direct antecedents from the axioms. The components of complete argumentation are therefore the applied axioms and the applied forms of inference. (The formal correctness of the argumental form depends on the forms of applied inference: that is, whether — irrespective of the truth or error of the principles themselves — the theorem to be proved really follows from the assumed axioms? But the substantive correctness (truth) of the theorem to be proved can be ensured only by the correctness of the form of conclusion and the truth of the axioms, together.)

So where do the errors in philosophy come from? From the errors of the axioms or from the errors of the form of inference? Let us name the former conception the axiomatic theory of philosophical error, the latter the syllogistic theory of philosophical error. We have to choose between these two theories.

A common man tends to choose syllogistic theory. He is ready to classify the arguments of the philosophical systems he considers wrong as simple sophisms, formally erroneous reasoning. According to him, philosophical errors can be traced back to the fact that some philosophers misjudge the formal value of certain philosophical

arguments: they see sophisms in formally impeccable arguments (in those that prove the correct philosophical position), but they do not notice the logical error in truly sophistic reasoning (in those with whom they try to buttress up their own erroneous system).

This theory seems to be supported by the fact that different philosophical systems, however different conclusions may end up, appear to be based on the same principles. All thinkers are forced to acknowledge the principle of contradiction, or the principle of sufficient cause, the facts of everyday external and internal experience, the sure results of the sciences. If certain philosophical systems derive false conclusions from these basic truths, which are certainly true (because they are recognized by all), it is possible that they make formal errors in their reasoning.

However, syllogistic theory cannot provide a satisfying explanation for a lot of things. It is hard to believe that the mistakes of the great philosophers are simply the consequences of logical errors at school. How could so many great thinkers misjudge the formal-logical value of the most important philosophical arguments when the value of much more complex mathematical derivations can be judged correctly by all mathematicians, so that there is complete agreement among researchers in judging the value of a mathematical derivation?³ Whoever knows the complex forms of inference used by mathematics⁴ (not one of them has been formalized clearly by modern logics) may be surprised — if they take the trouble and check — with what a simple logical structure of argument was tried to decide the most difficult philosophical problems of the great philosophers of the past and the present. Among the categorical forms of the “Barbara” and “Celarent” modes, some simple modes of hypothetical and disjunctive syllogism, there are some simple forms of the so-called *reductio ad absurdum*: it pretty much consists of the whole logical arsenal of philosophical works that are avowed as difficult. Who thinks that these simple logical forms would have been mistaken all the time by the greatest philosophers?

³ The set-theoretical debates of recent decades have also been philosophical rather than special-mathematical debates. (Most mathematicians surprisingly were uninterested in them.)

⁴ Mathematics research the formal properties of aspects of things: in some cases, you have to analyze very subtle networks of relations. The complex structure of mathematical derivations only reflects the complicated structure of mathematical objects. The philosophical one, on the other hand, deals with the content side of reality: that is why it can be reached with simpler forms of inference.

That a scientific train of thought is formally correct or erroneous must be decidable in an unexceptional way on the basis of the rules of traditional formal logic, and even more by the means of modern logics. If the syllogistic theory were the correct one, only philosophical argumentation would have to be formalized rigorously, so that effortlessly and without the possibility of error, we could determine which philosopher was right. Why has no one ever been able to finish all philosophical debates once and for all with such methods? But the best way to clarify the unsustainability of the whole syllogistic theory is to try to concretize it by logically analyzing the philosophical train of thought that their opponents tend to classify as sophisticated.

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Suppose a philosopher sets up certain theorems A1, A2, A3, etc. and infers from them a certain X theorem, although this does not seem to follow from these according to the rules of formal logic. “Lo and behold, a sophism!” the followers of syllogistic theory will say. But if the whole train of thought is better understood, we realize that one of our philosophers tacitly presupposes one or another principle of its system, and this allows him to infer in this way. Perhaps this tacitly presumed principle simply sounds like this: “If A1 and A2 and A3 and so on is true, then X is also true.”

But even if it is not that simple, even then, the whole reasoning relies on a — perhaps unconsciously assumed — basic premise, which — if it is explicitly included in the premises — makes the whole train of thought impeccable. (So the train of thought cannot be classified as a sophism, or as a formally incorrect reasoning, but not more than an *entimema*, that is a kind of syllogism, in which one premise is ignored.) Of course, it is possible that this tacit assumption itself is wrong. In this case, of course, the truth of the proved theorem is also false. But not because there would be a formal error in the argumentation, but simply because one of the premonitions is substantively erroneous.⁵

⁵ Strict formalization of philosophical proofs cannot decide which philosopher is right, because, as we shall see, every philosophical position, if not from other basic theorems, starts from a different interpretation of the same basic theorems: it cannot be decided by formalization which axiom system or which interpretation of the same axiom system is correct. But formalization is good for forcing one to make all implicitly assumed axioms aware and to name them explicitly. Geometry has only been able to explicitly name all its presuppositions and axioms since Hilbert completely formalized them. During the tacit assumptions of Euclid and the other great geometers, many axioms were known without knowing it. Just because these axioms seem very self-evident, it can easily happen that someone uncon-

For example, someone from the fact that bodies fall “down” concludes that people on the other side of the Earth cannot live because they would fall off the Earth. (The problem of antipodes.)

The latter statement, as we know, does not derive from the former. But yes, it would derive if the implicit premise were true: that is, if the bodies on the other side of the Earth were “down” in the same direction, the bodies would fall in the same direction as here. In any case, this premise is wrong and so the conclusion is not correct either. But reasoning itself does not suffer from a defect in form, but simply one of its basic foundations is wrong.

The famous ontological God argument by St. Anselm or Descartes can also be analyzed:

“The absolutely perfect being necessarily exists. (Because imperfection does not-necessarily exist.) - But the absolutely perfect being is God. “So God necessarily exists.”

It is often said that this argument is *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος* (a step across into a different area of meaning). The antecedents remain in the ideal-conceptual order, but the final theorem arbitrarily transitions to the realistic dimension.

The antecedents, namely the concepts of “absolute perfect being” and “God” are analyzed. Only a conclusion should be drawn from them that remains on the conceptual plane itself: e.g. in the form that “the concept of God must be conceived in such a way as to include a sign of ‘necessity of existence’.” (For if I did not think so, there would be no God.) However, it does not follow that the concept of God thus created corresponds to something in reality. (In the same way it could be proved that fairies should be thought of as immortal, because otherwise they would not be fairies. But from this it does not follow that there are immortal fairies.)

There is only one thing that follows from the above reasoning: if with other impeccable arguments (e.g. with the cosmological argument of God) we manage to show the existence of God, and thus we know that there is an absolutely perfect being that is God, then from the above train of reasoning it must be concluded that this God is a necessity. That is, if it exists at all, there is a necessity.

However, if we use the above argument to prove the existence of God, as St. Anselm and Descartes did, this argument is sophisticated.

ciously assumes them in their reasoning. So it is with the fundamentals of philosophical systems. Many philosophers do not even realize what basic theorems they implicitly make. The strictly formalistic method is excellent for bringing such hidden presuppositions to sunlight.

But is this argument sophisticated for St. Anselm and Descartes? I am convinced that it is not. St. Anselm and Descartes do not go from a conceptual order to an order of reality “by mistake”, they more or less assume — one of them because of his Platonism, the other because of his rationalism — that there is a complete parallel between the order of concepts and the order of reality and thus you can move from one order to the other. So if this argument of theirs does not prove the existence of God, it is not because the argument is formally flawed, but because it is based on a false basic assumption.

According to them, there is no formal error in the arguments of erroneous philosophical systems, but there must be an error in its fundamental tenets. (I do not want to deny that real sophisms also occur from time to time, even in the works of great philosophers, but these have only a subordinate role for the system as a whole and those are by no means the ultimate sources of any errors that may occur in the system. The philosopher previously has inferred his erroneous conclusions, with a formally flawless reasoning, from his erroneous principles, when he then tried to fabricate even sophisticated arguments for his results.)

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All these facts contradict the syllogistic explanation of the philosophical error and seem to support the axiomatic explanation.

It is only on the basis of axiomatic theory that the bridgeless deep chasm that separates opposing worldviews and philosophical systems becomes understandable. Many times it is almost doubtful whether these are still connected at all by some common, general-human belief (in the theoretical order) and, accordingly, (in the practical order) by some common human ideal? Such a profound contrast can only be between those who do not even have principles in common! (In addition to these contradictions, how frivolous are the debates within the same worldview group, no matter how passionate they may be: yet they do not affect themselves, the basic principles.)

However, it is here that axiomatic theory contrasts with the fact (which we have previously written in favor of syllogistic theory), that namely the final principles and basic facts are the same for all philosophers; these are forced to be accepted by all philosophers. How do we solve this contradiction? How can the final tenets of opposing worldview philosophers be the same and yet not the same?

The solution can only be this: all philosophical systems have the same basic tenets, but each philosophical system interprets these

common basic tenets differently. (This conception will be called a moderate axiomatic theory, as opposed to the strict axiomatic theory according to the principles of opposing philosophical systems which are contradictory in all respects.)

For example, both the epistemological realist and the idealist acknowledge the facts of sensual experience. But one of them sees in them information about reality, which exists independently of our consciousness, the other sees only the subjectively valuable impressions of the cognitive subject.

So the realist and idealist conceptions have something in common and there is also something different. Neither the realist nor the idealist can deny that if I see this lamp in front of me, I really have a visual experience of it; moreover, both have to admit that my visual images somehow come to my mind “from the outside” because they are independent of my will. All of this is so obvious that it is impossible to deny it. But where “from outside” does the image of this lamp come to my mind, whether it is created in my mind by a lamp that exists independently of my consciousness or whether this is assumed by the unconscious forces of my own soul, or by a general human transcendental consciousness (which is a precondition for every empirical consciousness), etc. Opinions on this are already divided among the various epistemological positions.

In the same way, every philosopher affirms the principle of causation. If there is something, then there is a reason that it is something, instead of not existing.

But the atheist says that there is a sufficient reason for the existence of the world in itself; according to the theist, however, the sufficient reason for the existence of a possibly existing world can be only one, necessarily existing being outside this world: God.

According to the indeterminist, the free will decision is, in a sense, a sufficient reason in itself: there is no point in asking⁶ why X chose to do so, even though he could have decided otherwise. According to the determinist, however, the principle of causation also requires that there be a reason why a person has decided exactly as he really did: so, in principle, every human position can be deduced from the circumstances.

That is, the theist and the atheist, the determinist and the indeterminist agree on a certain more general formulation of the principle

⁶ Strictly speaking, the position described here is characteristic only of the molinist type of indeterminism.

of causation, but in a more concrete interpretation of this they already part ways.

There is something comforting in this recognition: behold, there are general-human ideals and perhaps even ideals, there is something in common between opposing philosophical systems. (Because we must emphasize that when opposing worldview philosophers both accept a certain principle, a more general formulation of certain principles, they are not merely agreeing in ambiguous words, as diplomats are accustomed to, but truly agreeing, in the real part, of a material truth expressed by the principle: it would otherwise be incomprehensible why different philosophers choose the same words to express their opposing principles, even when there is no “diplomatic” reason to do so.)

But the tragedy of human life also manifests itself here: when philosophers try to concretize this general-human “public treasure” of thought, it immediately becomes clear that they all understood something else — how many great masters of the human thought speak as many languages as the masons of the Tower of Babel once did.

The various philosophical systems all agree in one part of the truth, but on the theoretical and practical part of the truth, their conceptions are as contradictory as possible.

Philosophical error, therefore, does not arise from the logical form of philosophical arguments (because its correctness or incorrectness can be clearly determined for everyone), but from the misinterpretation of fundamental philosophical truths. Although the ultimate basic truths are the same for all philosophers, no one can deny these basic truths — but each philosophical position interprets in its own way. A philosophical error is essentially a mistake around the interpretation of fundamental truths.

Therefore, philosophical error cannot be refuted by syllogistic arguments: Aristotle already stated that a decision by debate is possible only among those who at least have the same basic theorems (and attribute the same meaning to their basic theorems). All syllogism already presupposes the basic theorems (and a certain specific interpretation of them). The basic theorems themselves (and their correct interpretation) cannot be verified syllogistically. (At most it can be shown that our axiom-system does not contain an obvious contradiction.)

If the strict axiomatic theory were true, (that is, there was nothing in common in the principles of opposing philosophical

systems) then opposing worldview thinkers could not even think of arguing with each other. But the fact that different philosophical systems all agree on certain basic truths, as the moderate axiomatic-theory we have ultimately accepted as true confesses, forces dissidents to try to forge arguments against each other based on commonly agreed basic truths: but in the course of the debate it soon becomes clear that they cannot convince each other because they each interpret these common truths in a different way. And in which they really agree is not enough to build a philosophical system on.

On the other hand, however, it is enough – essentially — for the foundation of the sciences. Both a realist and an idealist can accept, for example, the results of modern physics and that it can give them a philosophical foundation, although each will establish them differently and give them a different philosophical meaning. (Which, of course, does not preclude that each philosophical position being able to establish the sciences more deeply and naturally than the other, according to how much objective truth the particular philosophical position itself contains.)

Now we need to examine in more detail the difference between the different ways of interpreting philosophical basic truths.

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True judgments can be divided into two groups. In some judgments, the predicate expresses the necessary quality of the subject: such judgments are not only true, but necessarily true: what they claim is not only accidentally this way, but it has to be this way. These can be called principled truths.⁷ In other judgments, the predicate expresses only a contingent property of the subject: such judgments are true, but not necessarily true: what they claim is so, but could, in itself, be otherwise. These will be called factual truths.⁸

A truth in principle is a conceptual truth if the actual relationship between the subject and the predicate arises from their internal nature, nature and essence of the subject and the predicate – and factual truth if the nature of the subject and the claim, in themselves, would allow for a different relationship between these two concepts.

The characteristic logical form of the conceptual truths is the general judgment: what is a necessary property of the subject-concept,

⁷ For Leibniz: vérités de raison (truths of reason), for scholastics: propositiones in materia necessaria (propositions into judgments in necessary matter).

⁸ For Leibniz: vérités de fait (truths of faith), for scholastics: propositiones in materia contingenti (propositions into judgments in contingent matter).

the same is true for all individuals covered by the subject concept. The typical way in which factual truths manifest, on the other hand, is individual judgment: what may be true may be true only of a single individual, whether or not it is true of the other individuals.

The specific area of conceptual truths is for example logic, mathematics, or theoretical physics. (Windelband's nomothetic sciences.) Geography or History belong to factual truths. (Windelband's Idiographic Sciences.)

Both types of judgment occur among the theorems of philosophy.

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Among the basic tenets of philosophy that do not need to be proved, which form the basis of all proof, there are also conceptual and factual truth: the former are the principles, the latter are the basic facts. Basic facts are for example the experiential facts from which all philosophical reasoning begins: principles such as the principle of identity, contradiction, or causation.

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We have seen that philosophical errors are the consequence of a misinterpretation of philosophical principles. After having made a distinction between principles and basic facts, we can now go one step further: we can say that philosophical errors ultimately stem from a misinterpretation of philosophical principles. A possible misinterpretation of the philosophical facts is itself a consequence of a misinterpretation of the principles.

In general, different philosophical trends perceive the basic facts differently only because they have opposing positions on the interpretation of the principles.

All philosophical facts already include a general principle: it can be seen as the conclusion of a syllogism, one antecedent of which is merely an actual fact, the other an antecedent of a general philosophical principle. This general principle gives a philosophical interpretation to the raw empirical fact.

For example, the experiential fact “The lamp is now burning on this table,” is interpreted differently by an idealist and differently by a realist thinker because they all start from a different epistemological principle, or more precisely, from a contradictory interpretation of the same principle.

The universally recognized philosophical truth that perception (and all cognition) is an act of the cognitive subject and, as such,

depends in its entirety on the nature of the cognitive subject, and even on its present state, the idealist interprets that the images perceived by our senses have no material value, while the realist nevertheless trusts his senses.

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As far as the different interpretations of the philosophical principles are concerned, it is easy to see that the different ‘interpretation’ arises from that each philosophical trend makes it dependent on different conditions, in which case a certain general principle is valid — each philosophical trend designates the relevant limits on the validity of this principle.

Both Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Aristotle approve of the principle of identity, but Heraclitus taught that all things are just one moment identical with themselves, but it is no longer identical with that which they become later: the changing thing does not retain its identity during the changes. Parmenides, on the contrary, professed that things are so identical with themselves that there is no change in the world. Aristotle, however, staying in the middle between the two, took the position that there is a change, but in the process things remain the same: this is exactly what “change” means, that the same thing has such qualities first and then different later.

As for the identity of things to themselves, all three thinkers agreed, only the extent of the area of identity was designated differently by each of them.

The principle of causation is also professed by both theist and atheist, determinist and indeterminist. They simply disagree as to whether the scope of the principle of causation extends, if the principle of causation requires a founding cause outside the phenomenon in question, to the world as a whole or also to human free will.

That the act of cognition depends to a large extent on the subject of cognition is acknowledged by both the realist and the idealist. Only the extent of this dependence is judged differently: according to the idealist, the content of our knowledge comes from the outside world.

It is very common for a phenomenon to have two opposing sides — that it is ruled by two opposing principles at the same time. In such cases, the perceptions of different thinkers usually differ as to where there is a boundary between the areas of these two opposing principles. One philosopher allows one principle more space at the expense of the other, the other philosopher reverses it. Parmenides

extended the realm of permanence to the realm of change, while Herakleitos did the opposite.

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The ultimate source of the contradictions between different philosophical positions is therefore that the scope of each philosophical principle is not defined to the same extent.

It follows that the essence of a philosophical error is that some philosophers extend too much and others too narrow the scope of one or the other philosophical principle.

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Now we should examine where these errors in the scope of philosophical principles come from.

But before we can answer this question, do we first have to determine where our knowledge of philosophical principles comes from at all?

A common feature of the principles and facts is that they are directly obvious, their truth can be seen without any proof.

That, as we have seen, all the evidence must ultimately stop at such directly obvious principles or facts is very easy to prove. But is it not so easy to determine what this direct obviousness means?

Chapter II: Of course, everyone recognizes that the basics come from experience. But how does the human intellect recognize the truth of the principles?

If we take an epistemological position of realism and do not see merely the subjective illusions of our intellect in the principles (e.g. in the way of Kant), then we can choose between only two conceptions: either we say that the principles, or even the basic facts, are drawn from experience (a posteriori theory), or we must trace the principles back to intellectual insight independent of experience (a priori theory). The truth of a judgment to wit we can see directly (without having to infer from the truth of another judgment), if a mere comparison, or a priori, of the concepts of subject and predicate reveals that the two concepts belong together, or if it becomes clear at least by the a posteriori we observe the things themselves in which these concepts are realized.

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The a priori theory tends to refer primarily to an indirect argument. We can only know the principles a priori, with intellectual insight, because a posteriori, through experience, cannot succeed. Necessary

and general judgments (principles-truths) cannot come from experience at all: experience only communicates to us incidental and individual facts (facts-truths). I can experience that this and that and that triangle actually have three sides: but that every triangle must necessarily have three sides — it cannot be experienced directly.

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Our argument for evidence of principles also seems to confirm this argument. We have a very different certainty about principles than about empirical facts. We can easily think of an empirical fact that it should be different from what it is: the lamp on the table is burning in front of me, but I can also well imagine that it is not lit. But we cannot even imagine a principle that it is not true, e.g. it is inconceivable that existence does not differ from non-existence (principle of contradiction).

That is, we only know of an empirical fact that it is so, but we believe that one principle is that it must be so — and even why it must be so: how the inner nature, nature and essence of the subject and the predicate itself require that there be a relationship between them, which is expressed by the principle in question.

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Moreover, proponents of the a priori theory rightly argue that the logical structure of principles is such that their truth follows directly from the definition of the concepts within them. The truth of the principles follows just as apodictically from the definitions as the conclusion of a syllogism, from the premises. We need experience just as little to derive the truth of a principle from definitions as it is to infer a conclusion from its premises.

However, in a closer explanation of the logical structure of the principles, the proponents of the a priori theory themselves are divided into two parties.

Modern rationalist philosophers, especially Leibniz, in each case trace the principles back to the definition of the subject. According to this, in the principles, the predicate simply states one feature of the definition of the subject about the subject: therefore, in their view, the truth of the principles is a priori self-evident.

A serious weakness of this theory, however, is that many philosophical and mathematical principles, the most important ones, cannot be put into such a form at all. The principles enrich our knowledge precisely because their statement says something about the subject that is new to the concept and definition of the subject.

This difficulty is compounded by another form of a priori theory in which, following Aristotle⁹, he distinguishes two kinds of principles: in one case the truth of the principle follows from the definition of the subject, and in the other from the predicate. In the first case, according to Aristotle, the logical structure of that principle is only as required by Leibniz's theory. The Aristotle theory in question differs from the former only in that it includes another type of principle in which the statement cannot be analyzed from the concept of the subject, but adds something new to the content of the subject concept. Yet also in the latter case, the truth of the principles can be inferred a priori by the mere comparison of the concept of subject and predicate, to a basic concept and thus establishes a priori recognizable link between the subject and the predicate.

Thus, if we fail to bring a principle into the shape required by Leibniz (which, as we have seen, is identical to the first type of Aristotle's principle), the possibility remains to fit our principle within the framework of Aristotle's second type, which is usually taking into account, at the cost of more or less logical machining, that it succeeds.¹⁰ For example, according to the principle of causation, "every possible thing has its own founding reason". Already, the term "possible existence" does not include the term "founding cause": the predicate, but conversely, the term "establishing cause for judgment", or more precisely, the "establishing cause" does include a reference to the "accidentally existing thing". The definition of "founding cause" is "something that gives rise to a thing that may exist". (Reason for establishment namely it can only be that which does not exist necessarily, anyway.)

Based on all this, the a priori theory concludes that the principles can be recognized a priori, regardless of experience, by a mere comparison of the subject and the concept of predicate: experience provides at most the concept of subject and predicate, but their connection to a judgment is the work of our intellect alone.

⁹ Although the division of principles to be described comes from Aristotle, it seems Aristotle himself does not interpret this division according to the a priori theory. Aristotle himself probably traced the principles back to experience.

¹⁰ This does not yet prove the truth of the a priori theory (its Aristotelian form). Nor should a posteriori theory deny that there is a close logical connection between the subject and predicate of a principle, which can be recognized a priori, and which may be expressed in their definition. Nor does the a posteriori theory have to deny that a mind which has a perfectly definite concept of the subject-matter and the predicate of a principle, on the basis of the logical connection between the subject and the predicate alone a priori, can recognize the truth of that principle. It is only denied by the a posteriori theory that the concepts of the human intellect would be sufficiently definite that the truth of a principle could be recognized a priori merely on the basis of an analysis of those concepts.

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On the other hand, the a posteriori theory rightly refers, above all, also to an indirect argument. (Both the a priori and the a posteriori theory proves primarily from the difficulties of the opposing perception.) If the a priori theory were true, all philosophical and mathematical principles would be meaningless, self-evident, empty tautologies: in fact the whole of philosophy and mathematics would end in meaningless tautologies: yet this can hardly be taken seriously.

Moreover, as far as philosophical principles are concerned, even if they were also only self-evident tautologies, there could not be so much desperate debate over their interpretation. The logical structure of tautological judgments is so transparent that the question of the conditions under which such a tautological judgment is true, or how it should be interpreted, could hardly cause so much cogitation for philosophers.

In any case, if a philosophical or mathematical principle does nothing more than claim one of the features of the definition of the subject (Aristotle's first type), it really is no more than tautology. But it is none other than tautology, Aristotle's second type of principles, if it only establishes the existence of a relationship between the subject and the predicate, a relationship which is already included in the definition of the predicate. Of course, in the latter case the predicate says something new compared to the concept of the subject, (in this sense, such a judgment is not tautological), but the whole judgment does not say something new compared to the concept of the statement (and therefore it is still tautological).

Which means that the Aristotelian form of a priori theory is not in a significantly better position against this argument than Leibniz's form.

For example, the number six can be defined as "the number that follows the five in the row of integers." So it is a tautological statement that "six follows in the sequence of integers immediately after five," (because it is precisely this subject, the definition of "six", that is Aristotle's first type) but this statement is also tautological. In addition, "five is the number immediately followed by six in the sequence of integers," (because this follows from the definition of the predicate, Aristotle's second type).

The tautological nature of the statements in question will become quite visible if the definition of "six" is replaced everywhere by "six". In the first case, we get: "the number that follows

immediately after five in the row of integers, the one that follows immediately after five in the row of integers." In the second case, this will be the result: "five is the number immediately followed by the number in the row of integers that is immediately after five in the row of integers."

All this is really just a tautology, but in addition to this tautology, it is absolutely necessary to include something non-tautological to say about the principles.

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It is not particularly hard to find out what this non-tautological is about.

The simplest case is that this non-tautological message is nothing more than a judgment of existence concerning the subject and the predicate (existence-statement).

When a principle proves its truth by defining its subject or its predicate, it must assume that this subject and this predicate are concepts of real value, free from internal contradiction, perhaps concepts of things that actually exist, but at least are really possible.

Only in that case I am allowed to infer from the definition of 'six' that "the number that follows in the row of whole numbers, immediately after five", that "the six that follows in the row of integers after five", — if I know that a "six" exists that there is a number that exists in a mathematical sense, does not contain a contradiction — which follows a series of numbers immediately after five. And, of course, I also know that there is a "five".¹¹

Moreover, it is apparent that not only does there exist such a non-tautological logical content of every principle, but it is the proper logical content of that principle. For example, this judgment "six in the row of whole numbers follows immediately after five," I may say, "There is a number in the row of whole numbers immediately after five, and this is called 'six'." Obviously, the first part of this theorem is in fact the statement, the second part only explains our terminology.

¹¹ If I do not make sure to define only objects that really exist, all sorts of inability can follow from my definition. For example, I introduce a concept called "alpha", which I define as "the rational number that follows immediately after five." Based on this definition, it could be said, "Alpha is the rational number that follows immediately after five." And it would follow, "There's a rational number that follows immediately after five." Which is not true because no matter how close I choose a rational number to five (e.g. on the side facing the larger numbers), there will always be a rational number that is even closer to five, even more directly following after five.

In the same way, when I mean “human” by Aristotle, “rational animal,” it is not surprising that I will experience, “Every human being is a rational animal.” After all, I simply call “human” that is just rational and animal, too. The only thing that is remarkable is that there is a man at all, that man is a possible thing. The essential thing is that the two features of the concept of ‘man’ are compatible: ‘intelligence’ and ‘animalness’. This judgment is, “„Every man is a rational animal,” is written, “There is a rational animal, and we call it human.”

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And this statement of existence, or rather possibility (inconsistency) of the subject and the predicate, in which we have recognized the proper logical content of the principles examined so far, is impossible to prove a priori.

That it is possible that a concept contains no contradiction (not even implicitly), that the features of a definition are compatible with each other, the human intellect can ultimately know only from experience.

Whether an essence is possible or impossible, the compatibility or incompatibility of two conceptual features is, of course, a theoretical truth. What is possible is necessarily possible, and what is impossible is necessarily impossible. Therefore, an intellect that would know perfectly the whole inner nature of two concepts, by merely comparing these two concepts, could a priori also decide whether the two concepts could fit together in the same subject?

However, the concepts of the human intellect are generally too vague for this. If we compare two concepts (or two conceptual features) with each other, we will find that there is a certain contradiction between them, otherwise there could be no different concepts. There is a certain contrast between “animal” and “rational” because it means something different to be an animal and something different to be rational.

And we cannot decide a priori about such contradictions whether they are so sharp that they completely rule out the encounter of the two concepts in the same subject, or whether they are not so sharp. Nor can we show a priori that there is an open contradiction between these two concepts, nor that there is not even a covert contradiction.

This question can only be decided by experience.

Experience shows for example that the two aforementioned marks do fit in man: man is rational in one person, and also animal. (The opposite of these two qualities is only manifested in the fact that it brings into human life the voltage of opposites.) But one who has never met a real man could quite logically believe that wit and animalism are incompatible with each other: that what is once rational cannot be an animal, and that is once an animal cannot be intelligent.

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In addition, some philosophical principles have other non-tautological content. For example, even if I know that there is a (possible) potentially existing thing and there is an (possible) effective cause, I cannot infer from this that “Every potentially existing thing has an effective cause.”

The definition of “effective cause” is “something that gives rise to something that may exist.” It follows, therefore, that “There is a effective cause,”: in any case, it follows that “Something that may exist has a effective cause.” But it does not follow by no means that “Every thing that may exist has a effective cause.” From the above definition of “effective cause”, namely the “possible existing thing”, was in the partial sense (“some” possible thing that existed): from this, therefore, it is not possible to deduce from this a principle that applies to every possible thing in general.

That is, in this case, the statement about the existence (possibility of the subject and the predicate) is not the only non-tautological statement contained in our principle, but is further enhanced by the fact that this principle extends the relationship between the subject and the predicate to a greater extent in which it argues, as the definition of these two concepts would in itself justify.

If I want to describe the content of the principle of causation, it is not enough to say that “1. / There are things that are possible, and there are things that give existence to possible things - and 2. / we call the latter ‘effective causes’” but I must add: “and 3. / there is such an effective cause for every possible thing”. In part 3 there is a non-tautological statement beyond part 1.

Thus, we come to the conclusion that the truth of the principles, a priori, cannot be recognized by purely conceptual analysis because the principles are non-tautological judgments, the togetherness of their subject and predicate cannot be deduced from the definition of concepts.

A priori, only the truth of truly tautological statements can be recognized. However, a tautological statement cannot be a principle of any science because nothing follows from such a judgment.

Some principles can also be expressed in the form of a judgment that is seemingly tautological. (This misleads the beliefs of the a priori theory.) In such a case, however, the actual principle is the statement of existents concerning the subject and the predicate, and it is no longer a tautological judgment. In any case, these seemingly tautological formulas are logically very unsatisfactory expressions of the actual non-tautological logical content: it is better to avoid them if it is possible. (In the following, when we speak about a principle, we always mean the not even seemingly tautological formula of that principle.)

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Now we would like to supplement our explanations with the critique of the experiments of a priori justification of the two most important philosophical principles.

It is often said that the principle of contradiction can be seen a priori, because if we only compare the concepts of being and non-being, their radical opposite is immediately revealed.

No doubt there is some truth in this. No one can deny that the gap between the concept of being and non-being cannot be bridged. The only question is, do these concepts have any real value? Is it allowed to contrast conceptually existence and non-existence so rigidly?

Only the experience can answer this question. And experience, in any case, justifies the principle of contradiction: indeed, there is this sharp boundary between the realm of being and non-being, something and nothing. (The so-called dialectic of reality does not affect this fact.) The conceptual contrast between being and non-being faithfully reflects the real contrast between being and non-being.

But a priori, this cannot be predicted: against all statements to the contrary — it is conceivable (which does not even mean that it is possible), a world in which the principle of contradiction does not apply. (Aristotle also gives a detailed drawing of this world in his *Metaphysica* IV. book.)

In any case, experience proves that our world is not really like this, and a deeper metaphysical examination also assures us that this is not “accidental”: it must be so. It is not at all possible to have a world in which the principle of contradiction would not apply. But

this can only be inferred from the empirical fact that the principle of contradiction actually prevails in our world.

Since Leibniz, many have already tried to justify the principle of causation a priori. Recently, mainly neo-scholastic authors have been working on this. But none of these attempts stand up to the strict logical criticism.

All of these attempts have the same basic idea. A possible thing in itself is indifferent to being and non-being. So in order to exist, it needs something that moves it out of its indifference and clearly puts it on the side of being: that is something that is the effective cause.

However, it is easy to show that this argument is sophisticated. In any case, a possible thing does not exist by its essence: its essence, in itself, is still indifferent to being and non-being. A possible thing exists only by something that contributes to its essence, precisely by the existence, but actual existence itself ends its indifference to existence and non-existence, clearly setting it aside of the being. But that in addition to the fact of existence is another, namely an effective cause is necessary for a possible thing to exist, to step out of its “indifference”, otherwise it cannot be justified a priori.

In the language of scholasticism, it is easy to see that a possible thing has at least a formal cause, just an existence (existents) that contributes to the essence (essentia): but that there is an effective cause is not obviously a priori.

That is, the difficulty here is that the notion of “indifference” of the human intellect (indifferentia ad esse et non esse — the indifference in regard to existence and non-existence) is much more indeterminate than it would be clear as to what cause is needed (of the four Aristotle causes) to describe how this can be overcome.

Moreover, a priori, it is not even possible to decide whether there is a contradiction in the concept of the effective cause: is it not a contradiction that one thing gives existence to another, that it is different from it, although the same existential fact (existence) cannot migrate from one subject to another (Leibniz’s difficulty). This, again, is only a matter that experience alone can decide. If experience shows that there are indeed effective causes, then it is certain that there is no contradiction in the notion of “effective cause”.

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The difficulties raised against the a posteriori theory, which we have previously described as arguments for the a priori theory, can also be solved.

If the a priori theory asks how is our intellect able to create general and necessarily judgments (principle-truths) based on experience, when the experimental facts are both unique and contingent (fact-truths), we answer, the way to do this is induction. The principles of philosophy and mathematics are known by induction as well as the laws of experience. (This is also probably Aristotle's opinion. Aristotle calls both *ἐπαγωγή* and induction the way of learning the principles and the laws of experience.)

There is nothing unusual about our intellect coming to theoretical truths from experiential facts by induction, since no doubt a significant part of the laws of experience recognized by induction are also principle truths, as they necessarily follow from the nature of things.¹² (Principle truth, for example, the general law of gravity and truths of principle are the characteristics of the motion of the planets which necessarily follow from this general law of gravity. However, the properties of the motion of the planets that arise only from the "random" initial entropy of the material of the Solar System are only factual truths.)

But even if we know the laws of experience and the principles of philosophy or mathematics by induction, the logical nature of the two kinds of theorems is not exactly the same.

As we have already mentioned, a certain substantive connection between the subject and the predicate of the principles can be recognized a priori, even if it is not clear enough (due to the vagueness of our concepts) to be able to see the truth of the principles a priori. However, there is usually no a priori suspicion of the subject and the predicate of the laws of experience, it is only experience that teaches that this subject belongs to this predicate. For example, a priori, it seems to be no more likely that 44°C is the melting point of phosphorus than that is 22°C or even 88°C.

Moreover, if a law of experience is justified by experience, it still needs to be explained why this predicate is related to this subject. For example, the task of theoretical physics is to explain, based on the atomic and molecular structure of phosphorus, why phosphorus melts at 44°C.

However, once the principles have been proven by experience, they are "self-evident" and do not need further explanation.

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¹² Also according to Montesquieu: Les lois sont les rapports nécessaires qui résultent de la nature des choses (Laws are the necessary relationships that result from the nature of things).

Now we still have to respond to the argument of the a priori theory drawn from the analysis of our evidence experience.

It is not true that we cannot even imagine the erroneousness of a philosophical (or mathematical) principle. For example, a world is conceivable in which the principle of contradiction would not apply: as we have said above, it was Aristotle, the first formulator of the principle of contradiction, who was the first to think about what strange consequences it would have if this principle had not been true. (With this train of thought Aristotle wanted to support the truth of this principle.)

Even more conceivable is a world in which for example the principle of causation would not have been valid: here things would have come into being without an effective cause, and in all things absolute chance and absolute whim would have dominated.

We know only from experience that both the principle of contradiction and the principle of causation are true in our real world. From this experience can we then conclude that a world in which these two principles (and the other principles) do not apply is not even possible.

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We recognize, of course, that a priori arguments can be made in favor of the truth of any principle, if only because, as already mentioned, a certain substantive connection between the subject and predicate of a principle can be recognized a priori, but these a priori arguments are not at all imperious. Arguments of similar weight can be made against any principle without actually being able to be overturned.

It can be argued that 'intelligence' and 'animalness' are compatible attributes: it can be argued that there is no obvious contradiction between the two concepts, or how harmoniously these two attributes would complement each other, and so on.

But the same could be rightly pointed out as to how much discrepancy there is between these two concepts and the inference between them.

That is, the a priori arguments can be made for or against a principle, and because of the vagueness of our concepts, they have only probabilistic value.

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However, these a priori arguments are good, so that once we are convinced of the truth of a principle, we can forget the experiential origin of that belief and overestimating the probative value of those

a priori arguments, and retrospectively believe that this conviction is based solely on them.

In this respect, our meaning is a real propheta post eventum, a fortune-teller who foretells events with great wisdom: if experience has already proved the truth of a principle before it, it will 'a priori' see and "predict" that it must be so.

Chapter III: We can now answer the question raised in Chapter I: Where do errors in the scope of philosophical principles come from?

We now understand that these errors are simply common errors in the induction process, with too broad or too narrow the scope of the induced truth, excessive venture and excessive cautiousness.

There is always a danger of over-reckless generalization once it is about induction, that is, generalization. This danger is particularly great in the case of philosophical principles, because their apparent a priori evidence diverts attention from their experiential origins and forces us to put them in such a broad general way so as empirical facts do not justify at all.

Excessive caution in generalizations, however, is always a reaction to the hasty generalizations of older philosophers: fear of rigid dogmatism and groundless speculation.

Of course, it also has its detrimental consequences. A philosophy that has no general principles may contain fewer material errors than a dogmatic system — because it simply does not take a position on really difficult philosophical questions — but it does not achieve the proper purpose of philosophy: it cannot give a logically closed and unified world explanation, it is stuck in some primitive positivism and eclecticism.

Otherwise, philosophy is not the only science that must find a way somewhere between the extremes of dogmatism and eclecticism, this is also the main methodological problem of several disciplines.

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We will better understand the real difficulties of philosophical research if we analyze in more detail the inductive procedure by which we can recognize each philosophical principle.

Aristotle, who first examined the logical laws of induction, taught that the only perfect form of induction is that based on a complete list of all cases. It follows from this that any other type of induction has at most a probabilistic value. Moreover, in fact, it is

almost never possible to examine every single case in practice (especially if the number of cases is infinite), and we should give up on gaining certain knowledge through induction. (At most, we could allow — if, in many cases, the result of the same empirical study — to be "almost" sure that this is indeed a general lawfulness.)

In reality, however, even a significant part of the laws of experience, and even more so philosophical or mathematical principles, can be recognized on the basis of a single specific case, with perfect certainty, which is contrary to Aristotle's theory of induction.

In our view, the correct theory of induction, in contrast to Aristotle, must start from the exact opposite idea, for induction is in principle sufficient to observe only a single case.

Things in a single case can only behave as their nature dictates, given the circumstances. And the nature of things always remains one and the same. Thus, if a rule in a single case prevails, we can already be sure that, in similar circumstances, it will always prevail.

For example, if phosphorus melts at 44°C in one case, there is no doubt that, under the same conditions, it will always be the melting point of phosphorus. If there is only one human being, it is already certain that "rationality" and "animalism" are generally compatible qualities. If two given points, A and B, can be connected by a straight line, it is absolutely true that a straight line can be laid through any two points.¹³

From an empirical fact can be inferred directly an induction only in relation to the class of cases that are essentially homogeneous to it. For example, it follows from the fact that a piece of aluminum conducts electricity well that aluminum is generally a good electrical conductor.

¹³ A general truth cannot yet be recognized on the basis of a single factual experience unless that single fact, in itself, would permit several generalizations. It is true that in the experiential sciences this is the more common case. For example, the physicist from knowing the whole course of a function: a single point in the value range of a function does not yet clearly define the shape of the function sought. From the fact that the phosphorus melts at 1 atm. and 44°C, it is not yet possible to calculate at which temperature melts the phosphorus at another atmospheric pressure. In such a case, it is really necessary to observe many cases (e.g. measuring the melting point of phosphorus at different pressures.)

But if it is a much more common case in the experiential sciences that a lot of empirical data is needed to state a general law, it does not change the fact that the basic type of induction is only one that can infer a general truth from a single specific case.

But either way, it is certain that in the case of philosophical and mathematical principles there is this kind of induction: to recognize the principles a single experiential example is sufficient.

However, for cases that are different from the initial fact, of course, nothing follows. From the fact that a piece of aluminum conducts good electricity nothing follows, for example, rubber.

This is clear. The only problem is that in philosophy it is not always easy to decide which cases can be considered essentially homogeneous and which are heterogeneous in relation to a given case, when the similarity between two cases is sufficient to infer from one to the other. It depends precisely on how generally we can state a philosophical principle with reference to a certain factual experience.

That is why from here it is much easier to see from a philosophical principle that it is true, than to decide to what extent it is true.

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But why does induction not have similar difficulties and uncertainties in math and natural sciences?

As for mathematics, this is due to the very simple and clear logical structure of mathematical subjects. For example, without any further investigation, it is clear that if a line can be drawn through two given points, then a line can be laid through any two points, because the points of space are completely equivalent to each other. We have such a clear concept of “point” that it is directly obvious to us: there simply cannot be such a qualitative difference between two points that it could eliminate their equivalence, from a geometric point of view.

Already in the natural sciences, in principle, induction has the same uncertainty as in philosophy, being that the natural sciences deal with existing reality in the same way as the philosopher, and not with abstract objects with an artificially simplified logical structure, as mathematics does. It is equally a problem for the physicist as to what extent he can claim to be true to a law of experience, by induction, as it is for the philosopher to what extent he can state a philosophical principle with a clear conscience. (It is not clear, without further ado, whether there is a sufficiently high degree of similarity between aluminum and, say, copper, to state the electrical conductivity of aluminum can be inferred to the electrical conductivity of copper.)

But the natural sciences can decide similar issues based on experience. Even if it is not possible to draw definite conclusions about the behavior of copper by examining aluminum, the possibility is still open to observe the behavior of copper directly.

However, a similar experimentum crucis is not possible in philosophy: the disputed ranges of the scope of philosophical principles are generally just outside the limit of “possible experience” (Kant).

For example, it is a controversial question among philosophers that from the fact that certain unique things in the world do not come into being without an effective cause, should we conclude that the whole universe also has its own Effective Cause? This question cannot be decided by direct observation, because the Creator of the world, if any, is by no means a directly experienceable Being, and the dependence of the world on Him is not a direct experience.

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Nevertheless, according to our belief a more in-depth analysis of the laws of philosophical induction can clearly decide controversial issues concerning the scope of philosophical principles, the details of which are no longer within the scope of our present disquisition. We need only be aware that we do not have a priori knowledge to philosophical principles. The philosophical principles thus need to be justified by experience and cannot be stated in a broader general sense than the inductive analysis of experiential facts justifies us.

On the other hand, the degree of inductive generalization to which empirical facts really justify it must be utilized to the maximum by philosophy, even if, as a result, it has to venture into areas inaccessible to experience, otherwise it will not be able to fulfill its vocation, and cannot provide a uniform and consistent explanation of world phenomena based on general principles.

Budapest, 3 April, 1947

Translated by Lilla Ignácz

The Logic of Institutions in a Systemic Approach
Institutions in Politics, Law and Economics as Closed and
Open Systems

I. A logic of systems

1. Both institutions and their components are conceptually represented as organised into some sorts of systems. This is the obvious outcome of the classificatory nature of the use of concepts and conceptual representations (Varga 2010).

At the same time, human practice often abuses conceptualisation. Namely, it often overgeneralises the reason why a choice is made in order to over substantiate a claim. To reach this over substantiation, it puts the claims into a more general context than is actually justified (Marx–Engels 1846).

Systems in operation, by and through which we live and continue our social practices, are contingent and casual in their basic character. Of course, this is not to say that the selection of their elements and the way of their organisation is a gratuitous action within an empty space, to be filled only by the wish and might of the day. For instance, there is some connection between their taking shape, on the one hand, and the factors that have been instrumental in shaping them, on the other—although the presence of these factors as well as their actual impact may be quite incidental from the point of view of the existence and, moreover, from the point of view of the emergence of those systems as systems.

The constitutional system of liberalism as historically established is, for instance, one of the several possible materialisations it could have had. It is one of the possible outcomes of human efforts through centuries to overcome contemporary misery by setting new framework for human action in its relationship to law and the state.

2. At all steps, there is a close interconnection between the shaping of ideas, on the one hand, and the available store of instruments and their reconsideration at any time, on the other. Even the contents, directions and limits of human imagination are a function of such an interaction. For in the total social process, each step and contributing component has a variety of meanings, faces and links and