

5 / On Truth,
A Fragment

Rudolf Boehm

THE "IMMATERIALITY" OF OUR CONCEPTS
OF TRUTH, KNOWLEDGE, AND COGNITION

OUR CONCEPTS OF TRUTH, knowledge, and cognition seem to correspond to the ideal of objectivity. But in whatever manifold ways the underlying concept of truth is sketched,¹ all these definitions remain strikingly foreign to the matter [*sachfremd*].² The objects of cognition and knowledge concerning which one wishes to know the truth are completely indifferent [*gleichgültig*]. Simply, there they are, in infinite numbers. In order to gain cognition, to acquire knowledge, and to arrive at truth, one has only to establish the right relationship—that one required by the agreed definitions of truth, knowledge, and cognition—to any one of the objects—it being indifferent to which one—out of the abundantly present mass of them. To be sure, in order to gain cognition, knowledge, and truth, objects are needed, but just any will do; and, being generally available in heaps, they are the cheapest raw material

Translated by Osborne Wiggins, Jr.

1. Yet any such sketch, it seems to me, is only a slight modification of the concept of the agreement of the representation with the object, the matter.

2. [I could discern no completely satisfactory translation of the German term *Sache* and its variants. Consequently, my decision to employ strictly the English term "matter" and its variants, e.g., "material question" for *Sachfrage* and "immateriality" for *Unsachlichkeit*, occasionally produces a regrettable awkwardness in English.—TRANSLATOR.]

named in the statement itself, i.e., the statement about the meant matter formed by naming the subject.

Thus, our concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition are tantamount to Locke's opinion, viz., that knowledge and, accordingly, cognition and truth rest merely upon grasping the agreement or disagreement of our own representations (or statements) with one another. But concerning this, he himself says,

I doubt not but my reader by this time may be apt to think that I have been all this while only building a castle in the air; and be ready to say to me, "To what purpose all this stir? Knowledge, say you, is only the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our own ideas: but who knows what those ideas may be? Is there anything so extravagant as the imaginations of men's brains? Where is the head that has no chimeras in it? Or if there be a sober and a wise man, what difference will there be, by your rules, between his knowledge, and that of the most extravagant fancy in the world? They both have their ideas, and perceive their agreement and disagreement one with another. If there be any difference between them, the advantage will be on the warm-headed man's side, as having the more ideas, and the more lively. And so, by your rules, he will be the more knowing. If it be true that all knowledge lies only in the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our own ideas, the visions of an enthusiast, and the reasonings of a sober man, will be equally certain. It is no matter how things are: so a man observe but the agreement of his own imaginations, and talk conformably, it is all truth, all certainty. Such castles in the air will be as strongholds of truth as the demonstrations of Euclid. That an harpy is not a centaur, is by this way as certain knowledge, and as much a truth, as that a square is not a circle."⁴

A consequence of the indifference and optionalness in which the matter is left in our concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition is ultimately that we are able, or even want, to strive after and obtain truth, knowledge, and cognition only regarding the relationships between our own representations, it being irrelevant whether the content of these representations be chimeras, fixed ideas, any phantasizing whatever, convenient concepts, wrong perceptions, confirmed rules, correct

4. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV, iv, 1. #

If you put matters like this, "the subject comprises the entire content." And then all materiality (about which one should want to tell the truth) really degenerates without remainder into optionalness, into indifference. For the whole material content of any statement (which content is, according to Frege, as for Locke, only a question of "a mere connection of representations")⁷ then enters into logic only in the form of letter symbols [*Buchstabenzeichen*]. All that is left of the material content are, besides these symbols, the examples which the logician uses from time to time, i.e., those well-known examples with which the logician is accustomed to boast, with a childish self-enjoyment, his total indifference to all matters: "For example, the following statement has to be accepted as correct: if '2 times 2 equals 5,' then 'snow is black.'"⁸

Concerning the significance of the use of letter symbols for all materiality in a "judgmental content"⁹ or "conceptual content,"¹⁰ Frege gives immediately at the beginning of the *Begriffsschrift* the following comment:

The symbols used in the general theory of quantity divide into two kinds. The first kind comprises the *letters*, each of which represents either a number left *indeterminate* or a function left *indeterminate*. This *indeterminacy* renders it possible to utilize the letters for the expression of the universality of propositions. . . . The other kind comprises such symbols as +, -, v, o, i, 2, each of which has its *peculiar* signification [previous italics mine]. I propose to use this *fundamental conception of the distinction between two kinds of signs*. . . . All symbols that I employ I divide therefore *into those by which one can represent to oneself different things* [*Verschiedenes*], and *into those which have an entirely determinate sense*. The former are the *letters*, and these are meant to serve chiefly for the expression of *universality*.¹¹

Thus, the denotation of everything material-contentual by means of mere letter symbols expressly has the sense of allowing the material and contentual to be presented in complete indeterminacy as any representable thing whatsoever [*als das*

7. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

8. Hilbert-Ackermann, *Grundzüge der theoretischen Logik* (Berlin, 1928), p. 4.

9. Frege, *Begriffsschrift*, p. 2.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

and an "entirely determinate sense" exclusively from the material contents which in any given case underlie the judgment. It is completely similar for the "content line" or the expression "the circumstance that" or "the proposition that." "The circumstance that" it is raining outside is a circumstance of a completely different kind from "the circumstance that" twice two is four, not to mention that "the circumstance that" it is raining could be something different again from "the proposition that" it is raining. To speak of a "circumstance that" seems to include the notion that the referent "is a fact," although in another sense to speak of a "proposition that" seems also to refer to a being, namely, the "posited" being. In themselves the three expressions, "is a fact," "the circumstance that," and "the proposition that," appear so indeterminate that they would ultimately be completely exchangeable with one another.

There is easily recognizable, however, the design—or the consequence found in our concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition—to set aside everything material and contentual (about which there would be discourse) as indeterminate—optional-indifferent and to transfer all interests to the single determination of the "is," of "being." But this is in truth the most indeterminate of all determinations, determined only through opposition to the "not," "is not," to "nonbeing." This may be the unavoidable minimum in determinacy which cannot be evaded in any discoursing or thinking, and to this extent it may indeed be characteristic for "*the realm of pure thinking in general*" which is of interest to logic.¹⁵

THE RESULTING PREDICAMENT OF MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

IN PLACE OF FOCUSING ON THE MATTERS [*Sachen*], in opposition to which our concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition manifest an unheard-of optionalness, these concepts pass over to the chief, indeed—insofar as possible—exclusive, interest in the question of *whether*, yes or no, our representations and statements agree with the matters. The matters receive attention only on behalf of this "decisive" question,

15. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

makes us ourselves blind to the whole immateriality—and ultimately this immateriality will mean an untruthfulness—in a restriction of the question about truth merely to that of *whether* a representation or statement is “true,” *whether* it agrees with the matter once the latter is meant. (My meaning is that construing the truth as the agreement of the representation or statement with the matter, and fixing the question of truth to a question of the form “whether” a representation or statement is true, signify one and the same thing.)

THE PRIORITY OF THE MATERIAL QUESTION AS
EXPERIENCED IN EVERYDAY CONVERSATION
AND THINKING

IF IT IS THE CASE that in, under, and according to the reigning concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition we are in want of any, or almost any, concept relating to the priority of the matters and of material questions (which, in opposition to those concepts, is intended to be enforced here) and to the demand corresponding to that priority for a stricter materiality as a demand for truthfulness and a more real truth, then we are not at all lacking the experience of the relationships meant here. This experience is rather of the most everyday kind. We even connect it constantly with the questions of truth, knowledge, and cognition, in spite of the concepts governing these. It is true, we almost always do this only emotionally, but it is still with a rather strong emotion.

Everyone knows from the experience of everyday conversation and of the pauses in conversation which interrupt it again and again—or the experience of everyday dealings with men in general and the conversational situations which play a significant role therein—how here the priority belongs completely to the question¹⁶ of *what* is said at any given time, *what* is intended to be said, what is mentioned and must eventually be mentioned, what is in question, what is at issue. And, accordingly, everyone knows how, as a matter of fact, the other question—of how it stands “now” with this or that matter,

16. Of course, the question is hardly asked expressly.

question!" "What has that to do with it?" "What do you mean by that?" (meaning, again, what has it to do with the matter?), or, more simply: "So what?" "Of course, but . . .," "Yes, certainly, but . . .," "Naturally, obviously, as far as I'm concerned, that may of course be, only. . . ."

If, on the other hand, the conversation tapers off to the question *whether* it now stands thus or not thus but otherwise with a matter, then indeed important progress is made thereby. But everyone knows the experience that precisely a fundamental consent is thereby obtained, even if the question whether it is now thus or not thus still remains in dispute. That is, the consent which is decisive first is the consent that *the* question is now at issue, that now the discourse is about *the* matter which must be talked about. If *that* is clear, the question *now* is whether it is true or false, whether it "is a fact" that the matter is constituted thus and so. But, for the most part, even if it is clear what matter is at issue, the "thus and so" itself remains a question which "now" is a further issue; and the immediate object of interest is not whether it is now thus or so.

Perhaps the matter is a trip being contemplated. Is it a necessary or an unnecessary trip? Will it be a pleasant or a troublesome trip? The question will first be, which of these two questions really matters? If the question is asked, "But will this be a pleasant trip?", then the other person will perhaps reply, "The issue is not whether the trip will be pleasant or unpleasant; it is now necessary." Or perhaps the reply will first be, "But the issue is whether it really is necessary or unnecessary." This question still belongs with questions about the matter, that is, with questions about what the question actually is. The "matter" is to be taken throughout in the comprehensive sense in which Frege comprehensively excluded it, like all contentfulness, with the sole exception of his "single predicate for all judgments." This signifies that almost always one knows only "more or less" about which matter is at issue, and the acquisition of more precise information concerning it, by means of long and not at all useless conversations, must again and again postpone the question whether it is now finally thus or so.

Very frequently, however, it happens that the question whether it now stands thus or so with the matter is "no question at all"; rather the answer to this question is settled

manifest when this is already clear to us (when what is at issue for us is clear), but also and above all in the sense that we must *ask* ourselves *what* it really is that concerns us, what is at issue for us, what is the "decisive" question for us. Quite generally and in the widest sense, it is the question of what we should do that is constantly at issue for us. But again it is, most of the time, or else frequently enough, settled from the outset whether we will have to do this or that, *once* it is clear that it is a question of this and that matter that we must attend to.

Certainly, as in everyday conversation, also in self-conversation, the stringing-together of (frequently) correct statements concerning any objects whatever plays, as a matter of fact, a great role. Precisely this, however—talk that jumps from one subject to another, talk in which one does not know "what it is all for" if not to serve as a pastime—is idle talk or "idle-talk-with-oneself." One busies oneself thus because of the boredom which arises in any state of mere waiting. And this is the state one finds oneself in when hesitating, dreading, or refusing to enter into the matter which is really at issue for one. The idle talk or idle-talk-with-oneself is a means for avoiding this matter. Or perhaps one must experience that, in the matter which is really at issue for one, nothing at all can be accomplished anyway. Then one can merely wait and dispel the boredom with conversations [*Unterhaltungen*] in which correct discoveries about any objects whatever and their correctness itself play a great role. Chiefly, it will be so-called news, newspaper reports, or gossip but also, however, information concerning things which one oneself has done, will do, or will have to do "in matters" which appear as the obvious objects of legitimate occupation.

Most of the time such conversations and self-conversations have, on account of the indifference of their objects,¹⁸ the familiar erratic course. Yet if in fact we once remain continuously with the matter, one and the same matter, then characteristically it itself soon becomes boring. It will be

18. With this expression I do not wish to say that these objects appear indifferent to me but that they are themselves indifferent to those people who wish merely to make conversation. To those people it is sufficient that these objects (any ones whatever) just provide conversation.

problems, however, must occasionally be confronted even in scientific discussion with the denial: "But that is not the problem at all!" "The problem" *here* refers to the material question; the *what* is up for decision. And the expression signifies a removal to some distance away from a question of *whether* it now stands thus or so with a matter. *Once* it is clear *what* "the problem" is, then it not seldom turns out that to the decisive question of whether it is now thus or so (after it is clear that this is the question) one says, "That is no problem at all." Here, one means by "no problem" that the answer to the question whether it is now thus or so creates no difficulties whatever; the answer is given, familiar, or to be found out without further ado. Since first and foremost the interests of scientific research accept *problems* (in the sense precisely defined by Aristotle), and not material questions (in the sense defined above by us), and also, consequently, not the question, "What is the problem?,"²⁰ discussion in the realm of science generally plays only a subordinate role. "What is there to discuss?", it will be said when it is an issue of pure discoveries of fact; one must simply inspect (if necessary, one does it oneself). What is to be discussed is only whether this—to discover this or that, this or that discovery—is at issue in the scientific question concerned.

Such a discussion can perhaps arise following a scientific report or in regard to a scientific paper, where indeed material questions enter into the foreground, but characteristically—from the visual angle of our science—appearing only on a level which is really no longer that of scientific research itself but merely that of published information on already obtained results of research. Then the question is asked whether the communicated discoveries (whose correctness may not be subject to dispute) belong to the theme. A further question is asked about the relationship. For a scientific question it is not sufficient to amass some hundred correct statements and to string together, only piece by piece, factually indisputable propositions, even though they themselves may have an entirely indubitable reference to the proposed theme. As "true,"

²⁰ Problems, however, usually taper off to "questions of fact" (*quaestiones facti*), in a narrower or broader sense (cf. Frege), which are not to be furthered by means of discussion but are to be answered through inspection.

and that, what to conclude with, so that "the matter becomes clear" for the reader, the colleague? It is a material question in the sense designated by us, even though it may be regarded, in conformity with the reigning concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition, as a "mere" practical question of skill in "presentation" only. And, in comparison with the actual scientific problem, it has a peculiar priority which must be incumbent even upon the reluctant scientist: in cases of failure in "presentation," the acquired and communicated "cognitions" do not, or at least do not adequately, receive acceptance, however "correct" they may otherwise be.

THE FATE OF THE PRIORITY OF THE MATERIAL QUESTION IN THE SCIENCES

FINALLY, THE PRIORITY OF MATERIAL QUESTIONS is manifest within science precisely in those circumstances in which material questions are at last almost utterly excluded. This happens through the establishment of the theme, through the fixation of objects of whole scientific disciplines. What really is the question, what matter is really at issue, and similar questions are from a certain point on refused by the specific science with the simple explanation: we are here cultivating physics and not politics, we are here cultivating chemistry and not history, we are here cultivating mathematics and not physics, we are here cultivating psychology and not sociology, we are here cultivating sociology and not philosophy. It is well known how, through appeal to the specific orientation that determines the formulating of questions in a given discipline,²² debate concerning entire complexes of material relations is thwarted, so that even the subsequent institution of interdisciplinary cooperation is able to change things only when it leads to the establishment of a new discipline with its own objects and its own problem set.

By means of a prior decision made about the matter which should be of concern, the priority of material questions, i.e., the priority of the question "What is the question?", is here

22. And a discipline is given through the fixation of its objects, through the decision concerning what is exclusively "its matter" to be investigated.

6 / On the Method of
Phenomenological Reduction, Its
Presuppositions, and Its Future

Edward G. Ballard

HUSSERL'S METHOD OF REDUCTION is sometimes summarily described as an application of the same kind of abstraction that is performed in a rough and ready way by men of common sense and far more carefully by scientists. Even some practiced phenomenologists seem, by their rather cursory treatment of the reductive method, to concur in this judgment. Father Van Breda, on the contrary, points out that Husserl himself supposed the method to be unique and to accomplish a complete change in the nature and orientation of the whole of philosophy.¹ He also notes that Husserl was vastly puzzled by his method and that he spent much of his philosophic life in attempting to understand it and the consequences of using it.

Husserl used the expression "pure phenomena" to refer to the irreducible terminal point reached by this method, but it is not clear just what the pure phenomena are. Are they completely unconceptualized and uninterpreted phenomena? If so, then it is easy to understand Merleau-Ponty's assertion that the one thing learned from the reductive method is the impossibility of a complete reduction.²

Completeness or incompleteness, however, must be determined by reference to some standard; and whence such a standard, unless developed and defended within the philosophy

1. "La Réduction phénoménologique," Husserl, *Cahiers de Royaumont Philosophie* No. 14 (Paris, 1959), pp. 307-33.

2. *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York, 1962), p. xiv.

exploited by the establishment of a dogmatism of questions (and of the dismissal and prohibition of other questions). This is finally surpassed by a dogmatic logic of what in general—beyond the questionings of the various disciplines—can be an object of scientific debate, questioning, research, and investigation, viz., problems, as presented in Frege's logic, and not material questions. With respect to material questions, the science behaves indifferently according to its abilities; and, if need be, the science is prepared to yield these questions to philosophy.

HUSSERL'S IDEA of the phenomenological reduction, which, as the strictest general principle, grants to material questions (in the designated sense) priority over any kind of problems of decision concerning being and nonbeing (in the "world"), would, in the light of what is remarked here, be capable perhaps of a new, simpler, and yet truer interpretation.

interesting only for the participator in the conversation, to whom this matter is really that about which his whole life (according at least to his own representations and his own will) rotates.

THE PRESENCE OF THE MATERIAL QUESTION IN
KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENCE, IN SPITE OF THE
"IMMATERIALITY" OF OUR CONCEPTS OF
TRUTH, KNOWLEDGE, AND COGNITION

IT WILL BE FOUND PECULIAR (by no means unjustly) that the examples given for the priority of the material question (by which is here to be understood the question "What matter is at issue?") in everyday life seem to refer entirely to the "pragmatic" realm of "practical" dealings with men and things. And indeed it seems to me that in our reigning concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition and in the "praxis" belonging to them any priority of the material question is—fatally, as it seems to me—repelled. Repelled but not completely ousted. What was remarked regarding everyday conversation and self-conversation corresponds to what may also be observed in the region of knowledge and science.

First, what was said with respect to everyday conversation is quite similarly valid for scientific conversation, scientific discussion. And what we remember as applying to the self-conversation of thinking holds likewise for the deliberation of the scientist with himself. The discussion and the deliberation revolve around a determinate "theme." And statements which have no, or simply no immediate, relation to this theme are dismissed as "not belonging to the matter," howsoever indisputably correct they may otherwise be.

The reigning type of scientific questioning is, to be sure, that of the *problem*. In Aristotle's precise definition, "If it is asked, 'Is "an animal that walks on two feet" a definition of man or no?' (or 'Is "animal" his genus or no?') the result is a *problem*."¹⁹ Information concerning the solution of such

19. Aristotle *Topica* 1-4. 101b32-34. [I have here used the English translation by W. A. Pickard-Cambridge in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 190-91. —TRANSLATOR.]

from the outset. It is only not settled whether the question to which this answer is given on the whole concerns the matter, i.e., whether this question is the "right" question. For example, it may be settled from the outset that the trip one contemplates will be an unpleasant one. On the other hand, it may be no less clear from the outset that it is, as we say, "really" necessary.¹⁷ Now the question is only what counts: the point of view of necessity or nonnecessity, or that of pleasantness or unpleasantness. If *this* question is decided, then no further question is to be asked. This question can indeed be asked in the form, *whether* the "right" point of view is the question of necessity or nonnecessity and not rather the question merely of pleasantness or unpleasantness. But this possible formulation cannot conceal the fact that it is a completely different question whether something "is a fact" or whether this and that or the other is "the question." What is at issue and what everywhere is established only with the greatest difficulty is *What* the question really is. Regarding the contemplated trip, for example, it may appear finally that what is at issue is neither the question of its pleasantness nor that of its necessity, because "what really matters" is the simple fact that the money required for the trip is not available. If such a discovery is correct, in the sense of the familiar agreement with the concrete situation, then, of course, "the matter is thereby settled."

What is encountered in everyday conversation is to be observed, quite similarly, in everyday thinking—as a self-conversation. Everyone surprises himself again and again, and indeed almost constantly, with thoughts which deal with matters that either are completely irrelevant or, at least, should be inferior to things which really must be dealt with urgently. These thoughts dwell upon the question whether it now stands thus or so with this and that, while this is not at all at issue. But this precisely reveals that we know very well that we must, even in thought, exert some effort to "stick to the matter." Above all, we have to think about what in general is at issue for us. We have to do so, to be sure, not only in the sense that is

17. Naturally, the addition "really" expresses an admission that an "absolute" necessity is not at issue now. And, consequently, there remains room for the arguing of other points of view, e.g., that of whether the trip does not promise to be unpleasant to such a degree that it is not to be expected of a person.

whether it is thus or not thus but rather otherwise—remains thoroughly subordinate to the question of *what* the discourse is about.

This priority of material concerns holds good for the opening (the beginning) of the conversation as well as—although perhaps to a smaller extent—for its whole further course, the priority reasserting itself anew step by step or “word for word.” It is even easier to show for the course of a conversation after it has once begun, since the unspoken underlies the opening of a conversation, and frequently “the question” is, to begin with, how to enter into a conversation with someone; and there many a theme, even the most indifferent, can serve very well. For instance, someone says to me, “Nice weather!” But I know that the weather and whether it is nice is as indifferent to him as it is to me. I do not need this information at all; he only wants to talk with me, and then about that concerning which we have to talk. (Only someone who wishes to refuse a conversation will take up the correctness of the remark, “Nice weather!” In this case the answer runs, “I see that myself!”)

The further course of the conversation must then come to this point and stick to it, or else we will fall back into silence or “small talk.” Correct statements which prove pertinent to whether a matter is constituted thus or not thus but otherwise and also the correctness or falsity of a statement as such are on the whole not of interest if the locution is not about the matter which is to be talked about. It is necessary to cite here the most elementary examples. If I do wish to know whether it is raining outside or not, it is completely indifferent to me whether twice two is four or five. The correct statement, “Twice two is four,” when given in answer to my question whether it is raining, is not then to be called “true” but nonsensical, silly, most inappropriate, out of place. If I do not know what I should eat in the morning, I am not interested in the discovery, even though correct, that it is raining outside; or, more simply, I am not interested in whether it is raining outside or not. I am interested in the correctness of something only insofar as it is a correct remark about the matter which is of concern. The most frequent form of “dispute” in conversation is not at all the dispute over whether what the other person says is correct or false but a dispute which moves in “denials” of the following kind: “That is not the issue at all!” “That is not at all the

although they unavoidably receive some attention. And it is upon this attention to the matters for the sake of attention to the agreement of our representations and statements with the matters that the claim is based that those concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition aim at nothing other than objectivity and materiality. But in spite of this, nothing is required of materiality or objectivity, and nothing helps support them. It is in this way that the utmost indifference toward the matters themselves can appear with the illusion [*Schein*] of the greatest materiality. One seems to be interested only in the agreement of our representations and statements with the matters and thus, finally, only in the matters themselves. But one is indifferent as to which ones. One is interested only in the question *whether* our representations and statements agree with the matters. Thus, again these matters themselves seem to be all that matters. In truth, however, one pursues only a question of being, a question about being or nonbeing, which, as is so obvious in a logic in the spirit of Frege's, has been completely detached from the materiality and contentfulness of the matters. It corresponds to complete immateriality [*Un-sachlichkeit*] and complete foreignness to matters [*Sach-fremdheit*] on the part of our concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition that everything material, having been logically condensed into indifferent arabesques (even the letters are stripped of their literal sense) and ousted by these symbols which now signify hardly anything, is thrust to the side. And as against this there is just an interest in *whether* some representations or statements concerning some things are "true" or "false," so that the question of truth itself remains merely such a question of the *whether* or *whether-not* in contradistinction to any question about the What itself, *that which* the discourse and question is about when it is asked, concerning it, whether it is thus or not thus but otherwise.

In spite of all the foregoing, the correctness and even the meaning of these remarks concerning the immateriality or foreignness to the matter (which reigns and is expressed in the chief and exclusive question of merely *whether* something is true or not) will still be unclear to the reader. At least, I would not be astonished if that should be the case. For precisely this is my meaning: in our concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition there reigns a foreignness to the matter which

beliebig verschiedenste Vorstellbare] and to be left out of question.¹² All that really has "its peculiar signification" and "its entirely determinate sense," i.e., the contentual, material (for a peculiar signification is always a contentual one, and an entirely determinate sense, always a material one), is thus abandoned to the optionalness of indeterminacy. "A peculiar signification" and "an entirely determinate sense" are ascribed, on the other hand, to other symbols, especially the symbol \vdash . It consists of the (vertical) "judgment line" and the (horizontal) "content line." The latter has the meaning "the circumstance that" or "the proposition that."¹³ The former has the sense "is a fact," and this is meant in such a sense that it can be regarded as the "single predicate for all judgments."¹⁴ This utmost universality, this utmost emptiness of content, this farthest distance from the matter [*dieses Sachfernste*], this opposition to almost any kind of distinction (with the exception only of the one between "is a fact" and "is not a fact") to the point of the utmost optionalness owes its entire sense exclusively to its indeterminacy. And this is thus set down as something of "peculiar signification" and "entirely determinate sense."

However, under "is a fact" or "the circumstance that," "the proposition that," one can, and indeed must, "represent" to oneself completely "different things," according to *what* is there in the discourse as "proposition," "circumstance," "fact," or as "being" a fact, a circumstance, or a proposition. That it is raining outside "is a fact," i.e., I see it. That Caesar crossed the Rubicon "is a fact," i.e., it is traditionally trustworthy, even if it is nowhere present now and no one is now able to see it. That twice two is four "is a fact," i.e., it follows from several pre-suppositions. That a solution exists for the equation $x^2 + y^2 = z^2$ "is a fact," i.e., three numbers can be found—although not on the street and, so to speak, nowhere in the world generally—with which the equation works. That in a dark forest a frightened person sees ghosts "is a fact," although no ghosts are present. The expression "is a fact" or the symbol for it, viz., the "judgment line," get a "peculiar signification"

12. If this "is meant to" "serve for the expression of *universality*," then we can first take notice solely of the expression of the logician's *aiming* at universality and of his *wish* that the optionalness of the matter "is meant to" be serviceable for the expression of universality.

13. Frege, *Begriffsschrift*, p. 2.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

interpretations, factual conditions, real things, or matters requiring serious consideration. But more disquieting than this consequence is its cause, viz., the indifference on the whole of the concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition toward matters themselves [*die Sachen selbst*].

THE "IMMATERIALITY" OF OUR CONCEPTS OF TRUTH,
KNOWLEDGE, AND COGNITION AS IT APPEARS IN
FREGE'S LOGIC

NOW IT WILL BE SAID: When one is above all aiming at truth, knowledge, and cognition, it is indeed, "to begin with," completely indifferent [*völlig gleich*] whatever be the object of the representation or the statement. If, however, the object is once chosen and designated, then one must (and this is precisely the requirement of truth) stay with the matter. And the representations and statements must agree with the matter once it has been brought to speech; they must agree with the object once it has been chosen. The predicates must agree with the subject or with its properties.

Yet the logic, which is in accordance with our concepts of truth, knowledge, and cognition, subscribes to Frege's statement: "In my description of propositions there is *no place* for a distinction between *subject* and *predicate*."⁵ How can this distinction be put aside? Frege remarks,

A language can be thought of in which the proposition, "Archimedes perished in the conquest of Syracuse," would be expressed in the following manner: "Archimedes' violent death in the conquest of Syracuse is a fact." Of course, even here one can, if one wishes, distinguish subject from predicate. But the subject comprises the entire content, and the predicate has only the purpose of representing this as a judgment. *Such a language would have only a single predicate for all judgments, viz., "is a fact."* Obviously, there can here be no talk of subject and predicate in the usual sense. Our *Begriffsschrift* is just such a language, and the symbol \vdash is its common predicate for all judgments.⁶

5. Gottlob Frege, *Begriffsschrift*, p. 2 (pagination of the original edition of 1879).

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 3 ff.

in this industry. If one is aiming at cognition, knowledge, and truth, then the objects, superabundantly present, easily replaceable, arbitrarily interchangeable, and indifferent, seem to play a certainly indispensable, but still subordinate, role. If truth is perhaps defined as the agreement of the representation³ with the matter, and the question should be asked, "With which matter then?", one may in fact be tempted to answer, "With any whatsoever."

Now, of course, it is not all that simple. It cannot be required that the statement "Twice two is four" agree with the color of my trousers. And, on the other hand, the statement "My trousers are black" does not become true by correctly stating the color for some trousers, even if not for mine. The representation or statement must agree with *the* matter about which the locution is made. But what matter is that?

Well, the answer now will be, "Precisely that matter which is meant in the representation and is expressly named in the statement, the subject of its predicates." However, the matter, as the object of the meaning or statement, appears again as completely arbitrary and indifferent, once it is meant and named. It almost seems as if one must only represent to oneself any matter whatsoever and name it, according to whatever suits the meaning or the statement, in order that truth, knowledge, and cognition be thereby secured. And that should be rather easy; for surely everyone will mean with his representations and statements something with which his representations and statements agree. If in the dark someone takes a tree for a man, he does not then mean that a tree is a man but merely that he sees or thinks ("believes") he sees a man there. If someone defines truth as the agreement of an optional representation with an optional matter, and if he is referred to the immateriality [*Unsachlichkeit*] of this definition, then he will reply that when he speaks of truth he means nothing else than a relationship to which the given definition is suited. Apparently, agreement needs only what one represents to oneself concerning a matter along with a matter as one represents it, or what one states concerning a matter along with the matter

3. [With a lingering uneasiness I have translated *Vorstellung* by "representation." I would have preferred to translate it with "presentation," but I found it necessary to reserve this latter English term for the translation of the German *Darstellung*.—TRANSLATOR.]

and constructed this way is styled after something that is not itself; we behave like builders who merely copy other structures already built instead of proceeding by an inner rule. Husserl's diagnosis and cure for this are the same as that given by the figure of philosophy in the epigraph to this essay, in words she speaks to the distressed, imprisoned Boethius: "He has forgotten himself a little, but he will easily remember himself again, if he be brought to know us first."⁶⁹ Knowledge of philosophy is the recovery of the self.

69. Besides this passage in Book I, prose § 2, ll. 13-14, the following prose sections of the *Consolation of Philosophy* speak in a similar way about rhetoric and philosophy: I, § 5, 1-10 and 36-44; I, § 6, 26-27 and 39-44; II, § 1, 18-25; II, § 3, 10-15. After examining the place of rhetoric in Husserl's writings, the next philosophical question to ask is whether Husserl does not implicitly claim to initiate a kind of golden age of human intellectual achievement. Now that technology can take care of human needs by overcoming nature's scarcity, and if humanity can be persuaded to make the transcendental turn so that the threat of anonymous science no longer prevails, do we reach a condition where the good life is readily available to all? Do we reach a life where both the poverty of the ancient world and the self-forgetfulness of the modern are both definitively overcome? To answer this question, another must first be resolved: is the inclination to mundane science and technology itself a sign that someone is also inclined to be philosophical, or does nature restrict the gift of philosophical curiosity and concern to only a few, and these not necessarily the experts in science and craft? If so, it is vain ever to hope that all men will have the self-understanding that philosophy brings. To handle this question would require a more extensive study of the ancient Aristotle and the modern Husserl than is possible here. I am grateful to Thomas Prufer for suggesting these problems and for his comments on this paper in its entirety.