# For Idea and Reality.

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A Journal,

edited

by

R. Nielsen and Rud. Schmidt.

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Year 1873.

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Copenhagen.

Otto B. Wroblewsky, Publisher.

Printed by G. S. Wibe.

Translated from the Danish

# How One Forms a World-View.

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*[1]* What is a world-view? Something that forces itself upon one, something that can be had for a good bargain, and something that must be bought at the dearest price, according to how one takes it. All people have a world-view, each his own; they can resemble one another so strikingly that one would swear they were woven in one pattern, but they can also be highly different. Individuals can disagree about many things and yet have the same world-view; they can also agree about many things, and yet disagree in world-view. It is important for society to know how much agreement in this respect is necessary if civil order is to be maintained; for though every human being must indeed have the right to see the world and life with his own eyes, yet if the disagreement between individuals goes to extremes, society is in danger. There are real world-views that cannot be reconciled; the thief, for example, has one world-view, the police have another; two such cannot be "mediated."

Were it not for the sake of the world-view, it would be a true saving to abolish the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Education; for what, at bottom, is the purpose *[2]* of this Ministry but to take care that a certain general world-view, one that secures society and is therefore highly necessary for all citizens, small and great, can be maintained, developed, and brought, in an impressive manner, to the consciousness of the whole people. But for the saving to be introduced without danger to society, a new and great discovery must first be made. There must absolutely be invented an arcanum, a magic potion, by whose application one is suddenly able to implant in all souls, in the mind and heart of all human beings, an equally clear and living sense of justice, truth, and fairness, a common unfailing instinct, which tells everyone that no one can have rights without having duties, or civil freedom without submitting to the laws, a warm and strong and heartfelt feeling that we are all brothers and sisters and are to love one another in all sincerity, so that no one looks to his own without at the same time looking to the common good: yes, if anyone could merely invent such an arcanum, the generations would rejoice and the spirits of the age would hail the new Messiah, for then the hardest knots of society would be loosed. What savings of money, of worry, and of spiritual labor! Then one could indeed abolish both the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs and compulsory schooling and the police and the clergy's salaries and the Royal Theater and the army law; one could in truth introduce thoroughgoing savings. And what progress in freedom! If someone wanted to learn

something, well and good; if he wanted to learn nothing, that too was well and good; one could now rely on his instinct and feeling. If someone wanted, for the sake of salvation, to have a religion, be it Brahminic, Mohammedan, Jewish, or Christian, provided he did not want to force his faith on others, well and good; if he wanted no *[3]* religion at all, but regarded salvation as a luxury article, that too was well and good; one could surely rely confidently on his instinct and feeling. Such perfect freedom with regard to the religious world-view would of course bring with it a like freedom with regard to the moral one. Just as everyone ought to be allowed to dress according to his taste, so long as he does not go entirely naked, so everyone should also be allowed to live privately in his own way; instinct and feeling would surely vouch that it took place in good understanding with one's fellow men. If someone wanted to be a Mormon and have seventeen wives, well and good; if he wanted only a single one, well and good; if he wanted none, but made do with uncertain income, that too was well and good. Then freedom would thrive and "self-government" would flourish, — if only we had the magic potion!

Since such a magic potion has not yet, so far as is known, been invented, the state is compelled to make use of those means of education which, in accordance with the population's traditions, faith, and customs, under the existing constitution prove to be the most effective, and it is undeniably those that are found in the church and the school. It ought to be expressly emphasized that the state, although from its point of view it chiefly must regard these institutions as means to the maintenance of civil moral order, yet by no means on that account fails to recognize that they have value and validity as ends in themselves; but it becomes necessary to make a sharp distinction between what concerns the church as church, the school as school, and the state as state, so that it may be seen from this how much is a matter for compulsion and what, by the nature of the case, belongs to freedom.

For the church as congregation, religion is the sole and highest end, and faith is *[4]* free, the proclamation of the Word free; all congregations are born free congregations, there is absolutely no exception. None the less the state must regard religion as a means of education and appraise the religious world-view from a humane, civic point of view. For the sake of education it must take care that the teacher of religion is secured so free and independent a position over against his hearers that the word of truth can be heard and the proclaimer of the Word not sink down to become the client of the majority he is appointed to educate. The teacher of religion must — for the sake of education — give the state an account, and his work is to be judged, not by

the particular creed to which he adheres, but by the ability with which he is able to awaken in souls the living knowledge of truth, the deep reverence for right and duty that is indispensable for good citizens, and to make it practical in such a way that doctrine becomes conviction, and conviction becomes flesh and blood in the members of the congregation. In this respect the state ought to exercise a strictly consistent supervision over all teachers of religion in all congregations of all creeds: there are — for the sake of education — no exceptions.

For the school, instruction is the main thing. Whether the emphasis is placed primarily on awakening or on the imparting of knowledge, the school as school has its own end and in its own end its freedom. All schools, the schools of the common people just as much as the learned ones, are in this respect to be regarded as free schools; no
*[5]* outside authority ought to interfere arbitrarily in the school's plan: the freer it can go, the better. But the schools are at the same time institutions of education; however the instruction is conducted, unless it is quite without character, there will naturally form a conception of the common human, a view of life, a generation's world-view. On this point the state is attentive. What in particular is the subject of instruction, how much or how little is read, is not the main question; the question decisive for the state is how education fares. If a sound and true and full cognition of what a capable citizen owes to himself and to his fatherland is imparted to the young, then all is well; if it does not happen, then all is bad, even if all the pupils left school stuffed with learning. The teachers and administrators of the school must on this point give the state an account; to appeal to freedom and to give assurances about instinct and feeling does not help: the state cannot content itself with the uncertain; it must have full certainty, it must — for the sake of education — exercise an effective supervision over all schools without exception.

Should it now seem as though we conceded to the state a guardianship that would have to be oppressive to freedom of spirit in church and school, we ask it be observed that at which the guardianship aims is, for the sake of freedom, limited to the most necessary, the most general, to something that can be reached by very different ways. All must admit that a religion which, however much is preached, cannot even awaken the civic conscience, is a poor religion, and a school which, despite lessons,
*[6]* examinations, and tests, is not able to impress and establish in the minds of the young the first necessary principles of right and duty, a poor school. In former days the state wanted too much; it wanted to make schoolboys into dogmatists and subjects into Christians; that failed. In our own days, when the state has begun to limit its

demands to the necessary, there is hope that it will attain precisely what it aims at.

The world-view that the state at any price wants maintained can be expressed in a few words: it is man's vocation to live in a society ordered by law, to obey the laws and to fill his place by a conscientious discharge of his civic duties; in its generality it is so colorless that it does not look like much on paper, but in reality so important that all enthusiasm for nationality, freedom, and fatherland, without it, becomes air bubbles and blue vapors. The social world-view has several enemies that it must combat. It cannot, for example, coexist with a papal hierarchy, for the hierarchy sets itself above the civil laws; it cannot coexist with an ascetic orientation of life that in poverty and renunciation despises the temporal; it cannot coexist with a selfish brutality that defies the laws and storms the barriers of justice in order to take the law into its own hands; it cannot coexist with a narrow-sighted, low-minded party spirit that only wants to satisfy the egoism of a single estate, be it a perfume egoism or a train-oil egoism; and finally it cannot coexist with the bottomless versatility which, under the banner of *finer cultivation*, lives by sniffing at everything, chattering about everything, being done with everything, and doubting everything, except the intelligent divinity of enjoyment, of diversion, and of opinion. When these opponents are set aside, the official, civic world-view can be reconciled with any personal moral *[7]* conviction whatever.

The personal world-view, which is to bear the civic one, receives its light and warmth chiefly from the two focal points, the Deity and the soul. Is there a God, and what is the soul? This twin question presses itself upon everyone who begins to think about existence. Can such questions be answered? Again a question. Which way is one actually to go in order to get them answered? Again a question. Then doubt awakens at the many questions. Our time is a time of doubts. To doubt everything is, people think, a sign of superior understanding, it is the beginning of wisdom. And yet the age, with its busy criticism and its free thought, has but little joy of all its doubting; it is dispirited, for doubt consumes; it feels itself faint, disheartened, and suffers from spiritual hunger. To doubt in order to test properly can be healthy in a practical as well as a theoretical respect, when what is to be tested is of such a nature that the testing can end the doubt. But to doubt personally about one's own self, about the meaning of life and the origin of the world, to nurse doubt, to brood over doubt, to doze in doubt, is unhealthy; such doubting is sickness. The present suffers from the doubting sickness; the pulse of thoughts is restless, the world has cramps, the race has fever; it is the worms of self-contradiction that gnaw at the roots

of the heart. Under violent chills the most absurd conceptions find a voice, and one contradiction chases the other. Modern man literally does not know what he is to take himself for, an animal, a piece of God, or both. On the one hand a language is used
[8] in criticism and philosophy as if human knowledge had no innate, insurmountable limit; the riddles of the world are solved, the old night of possibilities must out with its secrets: existence has no mystery, the Absolute itself lies open, transparent to the thinker's gaze. One can well understand that, if it is really true that spirit first becomes spirit in man; one can understand it when it is held consistently that the Deity, this principle of all-nature with its blind wisdom, whose light is darkness, is a principle of consciousness that strives upward toward self-consciousness, but cannot become conscious of itself until, with the help of matter, it has built itself a human brain. From this point of view man is then the self-conscious Deity, and the self-conscious Deity must in science — gradually, of course, through many exertions and only by approximation! — be able to see through its own unconscious work. Now one would suppose that, in the name of knowledge, consciousness was meant in earnest, that philosophical self-consciousness, the absolute form of the absolute content, must be the in itself highest, most glorious, most perfect of all; but no! it is not so meant. Man is, this must above all not be forgotten, an animal, a scientific animal. Only as animal has he consciousness, only by virtue of consciousness has he self-consciousness: the animal's self-consciousness is as perishable as the animal itself. One sees how the illumination shifts. *First the conscious was to be higher than the unconscious*; the Absolute had to go the long way around before it brought forth consciousness, for it sought knowledge, and only in consciousness was there knowledge. But then it suddenly dawns on us: consciousness has only a limited knowledge, dependent on
[9] vibrations of the brain; if disorder comes into the vibrations of the brain — which unfortunately can easily happen — then disorder comes into knowledge too; if a thinker got water on the brain, the knowing Absolute would have to get water on the brain too; the eternally divine knowledge cannot be served by that. What is knowledge to do, then? Emancipate itself from all heads, all brains and vibrations of the brain, that is, from consciousness! that was a clever turn. *Now the unconscious is higher than the conscious.* The Absolute then has no trouble with vibrations of the brain; it can do without brains, for it can do without all consciousness. Were all thinkers to land in the madhouse, the Absolute would not land in the madhouse, for it can do without all thinkers. Perfect knowledge is a knowledge in the unconscious, a blessed knowledge. How comforting, not merely for the Absolute, but also for the

animal with the brain. Now the knowing animal can die when it will; it is true that the brain goes with it, for the brain is consciousness; but what knows in the brain suffers no harm, on the contrary! the brainless knowledge is a blessed knowledge, blessed in the unconscious. That here are two irreconcilable world-views no one will be able to deny, and yet they must be reconciled and melted together into one, for otherwise dualism comes.

It takes artistry to draw a square circle; and it takes acuteness and a fine knowledge of the history of philosophy to reconcile two views as irreconcilable as the above.

If one starts from the assumption that brain and consciousness in man must stand and fall together, then one has only a choice between one of two things. Either to admit that there is a divine consciousness, infinitely exalted above the human, since *[10]* there is a divine knowledge infinitely exalted above the human; in this case the limit of human knowledge, conditioned by the brain, is recognized once and for all, and there is a mystery of existence. Or openly to declare that in the essence of things there are no thoughts at all, since in the things themselves there is no consciousness, and that unconscious thoughts are impossible. — There are obscure thoughts in the soul, because there is an obscure consciousness and an obscure thinking. The thought is obscure when the consciousness is obscure; but no thought, be it clear or obscure, is possible without a corresponding consciousness. In order to think the unconscious we must as necessarily use our consciousness as in order to think the conscious. We say of a stone that it is unconscious, but we say it by virtue of our consciousness. He who has never seen the light has no conception of darkness, and he who has never become conscious of anything does not know that there is anything unconscious, or what the unconscious is: he has no knowledge at all.

If some day a prince or a rich Englishman took it into his head to put up a couple of million pounds sterling as a prize for the answer to the question: *How does human consciousness go about thinking a perfect knowledge without all consciousness*? then it would not be a thinker of ordinary organization, it would have to be a genuine Absolute, who won the prize. It is an easy matter to subject the forces of nature to an unconscious will and to speak of nature's unconscious purpose, when by that nothing is to be thought of other than a figurative transference of what stems from consciousness to that which has no consciousness. If one calls without further all *[11]* striving will, then there is will everywhere, will in the stone to fall, will in the moon to approach the earth, and so on. For that matter one might as well say that in the locomotive of a railway there is an unconscious will to pull the carriages, joined with

an unconscious representation of the next station to be reached. But these are only figures of speech. Precisely the fact that nature works as if according to purpose, although it has no purpose, that it so wonderfully reminds one of an All-knowing One, though it has no knowledge at all, is the great riddle. When human knowledge, in order to be able to contain the Absolute, absolutely must be rid of consciousness and yet cannot get rid of consciousness, then it is badly off; doubts rise up, contradiction torments, and the anguish can become Tantalean.

Everyone who, for the sake of personal conviction, feels the need to form a world-view for himself had better see to it that he has not only his thoughts free, but also his mind free. Without free thoughts he will on many points cling to what has hitherto been accepted, to deep-rooted presuppositions that are not tested, and since he nevertheless adds a good deal of his own, the working through of the whole will be so imperfect that coherence is lacking. But even if the work of thinking is carried out with such consistency that an exacting criticism will hardly be able to point out essential disagreements between the individual parts of the edifice, that is still no full proof of its truth as a world-view. A world-view can, in formal respect, have scientific consistency and good coherence and in reality yet be false, thoroughly false, indeed
*[12]* absurd to the point of madness, when the thinker's mind is ensnared and unfree. We can cite a magnificent example of this from the most recent philosophy in Germany.

"The Philosophy of the Unconscious";[1)] a book that has already, and with reason, aroused considerable attention in German literature, is more than a well-written book; it is a work of the mind, carried through in fine strokes and with acute analysis of the most difficult problems of natural science, especially of physiology, that lies before us here. Upon an appraisal of the work's scientific design and peculiar point of departure we do not wish in the present context to enter; only from the world-view expressed in it do we cite a few features as a sample. — From Schelling's first youthful appearance with his intellectual intuition of the Absolute until the latest times, speculative philosophy, in equivocal accord with natural science, has labored to clarify for itself the absolute being. It has meanwhile been difficult for the intelligent, co-philosophizing public to follow and to keep up with how it actually stood with this Absolute. At one time it was presented as a logical all-knowing Deity: God in Logic, before he created the world, at another as an undisclosed, obscure principle, the indwelling ground and cause of all existence. Now at last the equivocation is removed;

[1)] Philosophie des Unbewussten. Versuch einer Weltanschauung von E. v. Hartmann, Dr. phil. Berlin 1869.

the visage of the goddess of truth is seen completely unveiled. The Philosophy of the Unconscious, which does not one-sidedly keep to speculation, but accurately revises the facts of experience and takes a vigorous grip on materialism, has fathomed the *[13]* secret. The great specter that has so long haunted speculative immanent brains has been conjured forth, the Absolute shows itself in broad daylight and the Absolute is? — the pure Nothing, the eternally blessed "gar Nichts."

The riddle of the world is that an unconscious willing from the beginning has driven an equally unconscious representing from non-being into being, for, as it says on p. 607, "in itself the representation had no drive and no interest in passing from non-being over into being, consequently before the onset of willing no representing was actual, consequently there was before the coming-to-be of the world neither willing nor representing i.e. "gar Nichts". As long as the will continues, so long will the process and its appearance in consciousness, the world, continue; when therefore there is once to be no world any more, then there may no more be any willing or any representing (since the unconscious representation becomes actual only insofar as the interest of the will requires it) i.e. there will again be "gar *Nichts*." With this the following description of the Deity (p. 606) also agrees: "The All-One Unconscious is all-knowing and all-wise, and consequently cannot become wiser than it already is; it has, as Aristotle also says, no memory, and so it can learn nothing from the experiences it otherwise made in the world. Consequently, when the world has once ceased to be, it has remained exactly the same as it was before the creation of the world; as blessed as it was before, so it is now again, neither more nor less; the world-process can in no way help it to a greater blessedness than it had before…."

If the Deity is blessed in Nothing, it follows of itself that souls too must become *[14]* blessed in Nothing. The hope of an individual continuance of the soul after death is declared outright to be an illusion. "Thereby the main nerve of the Christian promises is severed, for man is at bottom concerned only with his own dear ego; what good to me is the greatest future blessedness, if I cannot perceive and enjoy it!"

One gathers from this what the world is, what life is worth, and what all human poetizing and striving has to mean; it is disappointment, conceit, illusion, all of it. "The Philosophy of the Unconscious" sets out for us three stages of consciousness corresponding to three stages on the way of illusions. The first stage of illusion is marked by the individual's imagining that, in virtue of a given state of the world, he can attain happiness in the earthly life. That it is a deception follows from the fact that all pleasure is only a condition for displeasure, all enjoyment for suffering, all

joy for sorrow and pain. If human beings would only make it clear to themselves that joy stands to the sorrow undergone as the cessation of pain to the torments of the rack, they would soon be cured of the spreading sickness for enjoyment. "What one nowadays calls the specter of pauperism is nothing other than the consciousness emerging in the masses that the struggle with want, sorrows and their alleviation lies wholly on the negative (pain-) side of the zero point of sensation, whereas formerly, when the poverty of the masses was ten times greater, this consciousness was lacking, and the people bore their poverty as by the grace of God!" On the second stage of illusion the individual imagines that he is to attain happiness in a life beyond, after death. That is the Christian deception. "Jesus's world-view was too naive and childlike
*[15]* to separate soul and body," which is why "the resurrection of the flesh" is included in the third article of the creed. That it is an illusion goes without saying; indeed, there are even passages in Scripture that intimate that all consciousness, like all time, ceases in eternity. The third and last stage of illusion is that on which we are riding as on a railway. The conceit is that happiness lies in a great political and social future. One expects salvation from an improved order of society, from progress in industry and science: a monstrous deception! The end is that the old, worn-out human race is tired unto death, tired of the labors and of the enjoyments, without heirs and without love, tired of everything. Then there will come that exalted melancholy which is usually found in geniuses and in spiritually eminent old men; then it will come, the pure clearness of heaven, that cool divine calm that wafts through Spinoza's Ethics, where the passions are swallowed in the abyss of reason, because they are clearly and distinctly grasped in ideas. Then illusion is dead, hope burnt out, for what should one still hope for? Then the dead-tired humanity recognizes only one thing that is blessed, rest from sorrow and want, painlessness in the pure Nothing.

Is this now a comfortless, desperate world-view? By no means! that is to say, when the mind is free and unbiased like thought. Toward an objective scientific theory the mind must be free. That the mind is free can mean that the thinker does not make the theory his personal conviction, but has an interest solely in examining what it is built on, and how far it hangs together in all its parts. It can also mean that he makes the
*[16]* theory his personal world-view, provided he only knows within himself that he does it by virtue of a choice. In this there is nothing comfortless. For why does he *choose* the view, unless because he feels that it is precisely a view for him, a world-view that deeply and essentially satisfies his inner need, a view in which his weary soul finds rest. If someone, on the other hand, though in his inmost being he feels a need

for a living truth, a true cognition of eternal life, lets himself be overpowered by such a wisdom of death and annihilation, because he is impressed by the supposedly objective "Wahrheit," then he is in truth comfortless. But the comfortless does not lie in the truth; no, it lies in his own self-deception. His heart is sick, his mind is ensnared; he imagines that he stands face to face with the most terrible of all powers, the truth itself, and then it is not the truth at all! The theory's objective specter is precisely the illusion, indeed the illusion of illusions, the most powerless being of all, the shadow of a Nothing: the objective "Wahrheit," separated from divine and human consciousness, is — "gar Nichts."

To form a world-view for oneself is by no means the same as to form a correct representation, a concept as certain and distinct as possible, of the outward real world. The cognition of the laws of things, the course of history, and the coherence of the world can in an observer be highly developed, and the presuppositions on which a personal conviction is to be built nevertheless be extremely obscure, deficient, confused. In order to cognize the true, we must cognize the real and learn to regard the facts, be they of nature or of history, in their own light; that is certain enough. A world-view so shy of light that it dares not look reality straight in the eye, so *[17]* pampered a subjectivity that it slinks out of the way of science because it is afraid to meet the objective, so selfishly conceited that it positively bears a grudge against natural science, philosophy, and criticism, because it has a suspicion that these airers might easily take it into their heads to make use of the broom and tidy up a little in its nursery, such a world-view is naturally without value for those who seek the light and love the truth. But the cognition of reality is only the introduction to the matter, not the matter. To a personal world-view there belongs necessarily a personal self. He who forgets his own self forgets what is most important of all; bewitched by the objective, he has already at the point of departure begun by deceiving himself and ensnaring himself in illusion.

Now it is doubtless so that a world-view cannot be arbitrary, that the human self cannot create itself as it will, because it cannot remake the real world and alter the order of nature; there is a fundamental law of life that holds for all that lives without exception; only one revelation of the personal self can, in an eternal sense, be the perfectly true. But it is also certain that each single human being's cognition of the self is conditioned by his self-knowledge, and this self-knowledge by his self-development. Since it is now notorious that individuals in society find themselves at very different stages of self-development and self-knowledge, and since it is impossible that a

personally convincing world-view can gain entrance with anyone without going the way of self-knowledge: it follows from this that the many mutually conflicting world-
[18] views, materialism, nihilism, atheism, pantheism, rationalism, Judaism, Christianity, and so on, must all have full right to exist and to express themselves in a society ordered on the basis of freedom.

What then has the state to do in relation to the many personal world-views? Give up an old prejudice; renounce a thousand-year-old, deep-rooted illusion, and renounce it with the same sincerity with which a believing candidate for baptism renounces the Devil and all his works and all his deeds, — the old soul-corrupting illusion that a uniform, fully personal world-view should be something that could be forced by objective state laws upon all or at least upon most; that there should be an objective religious science, a science of faith, that could come to the aid of the state authority in getting the objective truth generally introduced; that natural science, philosophy, and criticism should be regarded only as provisionally tolerated, "heathenishly puffed-up sciences," which can only obtain the forgiveness of sins when they again condescend to kneel before theology and let themselves be baptized upon dogmatics. By thoroughly renouncing this old illusion and vigorously taking care of the morally civic education of the young, by supervision over the whole of religious as well as humane instruction, the state will attain its end and feel secure.

The many world-views are personal powers of life; they fight with the weapons of life for the right of life. As the struggle goes, it will show which among them has the strength, because it has the conditions. It shall show that they are not equally strong, because they are not equally true; it shall show in facts that there is only one that is eternally strong, because there is only one that is eternally true, a single one, that pearl of the Gospel, which must be bought at the dearest price.

R. *Nielsen.*