

[185] There are, unfortunately, only too many questions in psychology for which solutions have been attempted in the most various ways without succeeding in producing a general agreement about the solutions. But fortunately only in a few cases does the disagreement go so far that it extends not merely to the explanation but even to the existence of a psychic phenomenon, as is the case with the question of abstraction. Since Berkeley the question is not only how one arrives at abstract concepts but, rather, whether there are such concepts—what must be established first of all is not what the act of abstraction is like, whether it be a psychic occurrence of its own kind or explainable in terms of one or more other psychic acts but, rather, whether such an act of abstraction is at all possible, whether it does not by far surpass the human capabilities.

The solution of this problem must encounter considerable difficulty if such a long time has produced so little progress. Hardly will an individual today believe that he possesses sufficient strength to eliminate with one blow, as it were, all doubt and controversy in this respect. But what cannot be accomplished at one

*Page numbers at the left margin refer to Wien Akademie der Wissenschaften 87 (1877).