The talk deals with the problem of foundations. This is what philosophy actually does as compared to what the sciences do: it is thus not simply reproducing scientific results – this would be rather uneconomical indeed – but instead it is doing what the sciences cannot do: to look for a unified view of the totality of the observable world (by unifying the various disciplines) and for its foundations. The former is the “sceptical” part that is based on empirical insight, while the latter is the “speculative”, meta-physical part, because ground cannot be part of what it is grounding so that the foundations are always in some sense exterior to the observable world. The first aspect we will discuss in terms of the theory of systems. The idea is the following: As I have shown more recently at another place1, it is Spinoza who can be understood as the first philosopher introducing the strict notion of a system in the modern sense of ongoing research in the sciences. In fact, my whole book on these consequences of Spinozist thought can be understood as a first commentary to a remark published by Henri Atlan at the 1995 ISES meeting in Vienna: At the time, he visualized Spinoza as the early inventor of the modern concept of evolutionary systems in the first place.2 And from the scope of Spinoza’s seventeenth century Ethics we can actually derive the scope of the theory of systems nowadays, as the editors of the aforementioned volume have formulated: “It is important to see that describing the interactive history of systems in terms of stability and evolvability … fundamentally rearranges any discussion on values, aims, and purposes, and on individuality and subjectivity.”3 So what we will do is to give a sufficiently compact summary of recent results on systems. And we will shortly draft out a possible approach to their foundations.

1 Rainer E. Zimmermann: New Ethics Proved in Geometrical Order. Spinozist Reflexions on Evolutionary Systems. Emergent Publications, Litchfield Park (Az.), 2010. - 2 Henri Atlan: Immanent Causality. A Spinozist Viewpoint on Evolution and Theory of Action. In: G.van de Vijver, S. N. Salthe, M. Delpos (eds.), Evolutionary Systems. Biological and Epistemological Perspectives on Selection and Self-Organization. Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1998, 215-231. - 3 Ibid., x. (preface)