# FOREWORD

That a system which completely alters and even overthrows the whole view of things prevailing, not merely in common life, but also in the greater part of the sciences, should encounter, despite the rigorous demonstration of its principles, a continuing opposition even among those in a position to feel or really to discern the force of its arguments, is a circumstance that can be due only to an incapacity for abstracting from the multitude of individual problems, which, on such an altered view, the busy imagination at once conjures up from the whole wealth of experience, so that the judgment is in consequence distracted and disturbed. We cannot deny the strength of the arguments, nor do we know of anything certain and assured to put in place of the principles; but we are afraid of the supposedly monstrous consequences that are foreseen to follow from them, and despair of resolving all those difficulties which the principles, in their application, must inevitably encounter. Nevertheless one may legitimately demand of anyone who takes any part whatever in philosophical enquiries, that he be capable of this abstraction, and know how to grasp the principles in the highest degree of generality, wherein details disappear entirely, and wherein, if it be only the highest, the solution of all possible problems is assuredly also contained in advance; and it is therefore natural that in first setting up the system, all enquiries descending into detail should be set aside, and only the first thing needful be done, namely to bring the principles into the open, and to put them beyond all doubt. And by this, indeed, such a system finds the surest touchstone of its truth, that it not only provides a ready solution to problems hitherto insoluble, but actually generates entirely new problems, never before considered, and by a general shattering of received opinion gives rise to a new sort of truth. But this is precisely characteristic of transcendental idealism, that as soon as it is once admitted, it puts us under the necessity of generating knowledge afresh, as it were, of once more putting to the test what has long since passed as established truth, and,

assuming that it stands the test, of at least compelling it to emerge therefrom in a wholly novel shape and form.

Now the purpose of the present work is simply this, to enlarge transcendental idealism into what it really should be, namely a system of all knowledge. The aim, then, is to provide proof of the system, not merely in general, but in actual fact, that is, through the real extension of its principles to all possible problems in regard to the main objects of knowledge, whether these have already been raised earlier, but not resolved, or have only now been rendered possible and have newly come into existence through the system itself. It follows accordingly that this work must treat of topics and questions that have simply never been agitated or artic ulated among a great many of those who now presume nonetheless to have an opinion in philosophical matters; inasmuch as they still halt at the first rudiments of the system, and cannot get beyond them, either because of an initial incapacity even to understand what the first principles of all knowledge require, or because of prejudice, or for whatever other reason. Now although the enquiry does of course revert to elementary first principles, the above class of persons has little to hope for from the present work, since in regard to basic enquiries nothing can be found herein that has not already been said long since, either in the writings of the originator of the Science of Knowledge, or in those of the present author; save that in the present treatment, the exposition in regard to certain points may perhaps have achieved a greater clarity than it previously possessed–though even this can never, at any rate, make up for a fundamental want of understanding. The means, furthermore, whereby the author has sought to achieve his aim of setting forth idealism in its full extent, consist in presenting every part of philosophy in a single continuum, and the whole of philosophy as what in fact it is, namely a progressive history of selfconsciousness, for which what is laid down in experience serves merely, so to speak, as a memorial and a document. In order to trace this history with precision and completeness, it was chiefly a matter, not oniy of separating exactly the individual stages thereof,

and within these again the individual moments, but also of presenting them in a sequence, whereby one can be certain, thanks to the very method employed in its discovery, that no necessary intervening step has been omitted; the result being to confer upon the whole an internal coherence which time cannot touch, and which in all subseguent development remains, as it were, the unalterable framework, to which everything must be related. The author's chief motive for devoting particular care to the depiction of this coherence, which is really a graduated sequence of intuitions, whereby the self raises itself to the highest power of consciousness, was the parallelism of nature with intelligence; to this he has long since been led, and to depict it completely, neither transcendental philosophy nor the philosophy of nature is adequate by itself; both sciences together are alone able to do it, though on that very account the two must forever be opposed to one another, and can never merge into one. The conclusive proof of the perfectly equal reality of the two sciences from a theoretical standpoint, which the author has hitherto merely asserted, is thus to be sought in transcendental philosophy, and especially in that presentation of it which is contained in the present work; and the latter must therefore be considered as a necessary counterpart to his writings on the philosophy of nature. For in this work it will become apparent, that the same powers of intuition which reside in the self can also be exhibited up to a certain point in nature; and, since the boundary in question is itself that of theoretical and practical philosophy, that it is therefore indifferent, from a purely theoretical standpoint, whether objective or subjective be made primary, since this is a matter that practical philosophy (though it has no voice at all in this connection) is alone able to decide; whence it will also appear that even idealism has no purely theoretical basis, and to that extent, if theoretical evidence alone be accepted, can never have the evidential cogency of which natural science is capable, whose basis and proof alike are theoretical through and through. Readers acquainted with the philosophy of nature will, indeed, conclude from these observations, that there is a reason, lying pretty deep in the subject itself, why the author has opposed this science to transcendental philosophy and completely separated it therefrom, whereas, to

be sure, if our whole enterprise were merely that of explaining nature, we should never have been driven into idealism.

But now as to the deductions which are effected in the present work from the primary objects of nature, from matter as such and its general functions, from the organism, etc., there are certainly idealistic, though not on that account teleological derivations (albeit many regard them as equivalent), which are as little capable of giving satisfaction in idealism as in any other system. For supposing I prove, for example, that it is necessary for the sake of freedom, or for practical purposes, that there should be matter having such and such properties, or that the intellect intuit its dealings with the external world as mediated through an organism, this demonstration continues to leave unanswered for me the question as to how and by what mechanism the intellect actually intuits precisely that which is necessary for this purpose. On the contrary, all proofs that the idealist offers for the existence of determinate external things must be derived from the primordial mechanism of intuition itself, that is, by a genuine construction of objects. Since the proofs are idealistic, the merely teleological application of them would not in fact advance true knowledge a single step, since notoriously the teleological explanation of an object can teach me nothing whatever as to its real origin.

In a system of transcendental idealism as such, the truths of practical philosophy can themselves emerge only as intervening links, and that part of practical philosophy actually pertaining to the system consists only of what is objective therein, and this, in its broadest generality, is history; a topic that, in a system of idealism, requires to be deduced transcendentally no less than does the objective of first order, namely nature. This deduction of history leads directly to the proof that what we have to regard as the ultimate ground of harmony between the subjective and the objective in action must in fact be conceived as an absolute identity; though to think of this latter as a substantial or personal entity would in no way be better than

to posit it in a pure abstraction–an opinion that could be imputed to idealism only through the grossest of misunderstandings.

So far as concerns the basic principles of teleology, the reader will doubtless recognize for himself that they point to the only way of explaining the coexistence of mechanism with purposiveness in nature in an intelligible manner. –And finally, with reference to the precepts concerning the philosophy of art, whereby the whole is concluded, the author begs those who may have some special interest in this subject to remember that the whole enquiry, which considered in itself is an infinite one, is here instituted merely in regard to the system of philosophy, whereby a multitude of aspects of this immense topic has had to be excluded from consideration in advance.

The author observes in conclusion that one of his subsidiary aims has been to provide an account of transcendental idealism that shall be, so far as possible, generally readable and intelligible; and that the possibility of some success in this, in virtue of the very method that he has chosen, is something of which he is already convinced by a twofold experience in publicly presenting the system.

This brief foreword will be sufficient, nonetheless, to arouse some interest in the book among those who share the author's standpoint and seek with him a solution of the same problems, and to attract those who wish for information and instruction; while those whc are neither acquainted with the one, nor genuinely desirous of the other, will be scared away from it at the outset; and all its objects will be thereby achieved.

Jena, End of March, 1800

# 1 Little Red Riding Hood

Once upon a time there was a dear little girl who was loved by everyone who looked at her, but most of all by her grandmother, and there was nothing that she would not have given to the child. Once she gave her a little cap of red velvet, which suited her so well that she would never wear anything else; so she was always called ‘’

One day her mother said to her: ‘Come, Little Red-Cap, here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine; take them to your grandmother, she is ill and weak, and they will do her good. Set out before it gets hot, and when you are going, walk nicely and quietly and do not run off the path, or you may fall and break the bottle, and then your grandmother will get nothing; and when you go into her room, don’t forget to say, “Good morning”, and don’t peep into every corner before you do it.’