

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER
THE WORLD AS WILL AND
REPRESENTATION

VOLUME TWO

TRANSLATED BY
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SUPPLEMENTS TO THE FIRST BOOK.

*"Warum willst du dich von uns Allen
Und unsrer Meinung entfernen?"—
Ich schreibe nicht euch zu gefallen,
Ihr sollt was lernen.*

Goethe
Zahme Xenien, I, 2.

("Why wilt thou withdraw from us all
And from our way of thinking?"—
I do not write for your pleasure,
You shall learn something. [Tr.]

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*THE WORLD AS WILL AND
REPRESENTATION
VOLUME II*

To the First Book

First Half

The Doctrine of the Representation of Perception
(Through § 1-7 of Volume I)

CHAPTER I

On the Fundamental View of Idealism

In endless space countless luminous spheres, round each of which some dozen smaller illuminated ones revolve, hot at the core and covered over with a hard cold crust; on this crust a mouldy film has produced living and knowing beings: this is empirical truth, the real, the world. Yet for a being who thinks, it is a precarious position to stand on one of those numberless spheres freely floating in boundless space, without knowing whence or whither, and to be only one of innumerable similar beings that throng, press, and toil, restlessly and rapidly arising and passing away in beginningless and endless time. Here there is nothing permanent but matter alone, and the recurrence of the same varied organic forms by means of certain ways and channels that inevitably exist as they do. All that empirical science can teach is only the more precise nature and rule of these events. But at last the philosophy of modern times, especially through Berkeley and Kant, has called to mind that all this in the first instance is only *phenomenon of the brain*, and is encumbered by so many great and different *subjective* conditions that its supposed absolute reality vanishes, and leaves room for an entirely different world-order that lies at the root of that phenomenon, in other words, is related to it as is the thing-in-itself to the mere appearance.

"The world is my representation" is, like the axioms of Euclid, a proposition which everyone must recognize as true as soon as he understands it, although it is not a proposition that everyone understands as soon as he hears it. To have brought this proposition to consciousness and to have connected it with the problem of the relation of the ideal to the real, in other words, of the world in the head to the world outside the head, constitutes, together with the problem of moral freedom, the distinctive characteristic of the philosophy of the moderns. For only after men had tried their hand for thousands of years at merely *objective* philosophizing did they discover that, among the many things that make the world so puzzling and precarious, the first and foremost is that, however immeasurable and massive it may be, its existence hangs nevertheless on a single

thread; and this thread is the actual consciousness in which it exists. This condition, with which the existence of the world is irrevocably encumbered, marks it with the stamp of *ideality*, in spite of all *empirical* reality, and consequently with the stamp of the mere *phenomenon*. Thus the world must be recognized, from one aspect at least, as akin to a dream, indeed as capable of being put in the same class with a dream. For the same brain-function that conjures up during sleep a perfectly objective, perceptible, and indeed palpable world must have just as large a share in the presentation of the objective world of wakefulness. Though different as regards their matter, the two worlds are nevertheless obviously moulded from one form. This form is the intellect, the brain-function. Descartes was probably the first to attain the degree of reflection demanded by that fundamental truth; consequently, he made that truth the starting-point of his philosophy, although provisionally only in the form of sceptical doubt. By his taking *cogito ergo sum*¹ as the only thing certain, and provisionally regarding the existence of the world as problematical, the essential and only correct starting-point, and at the same time the true point of support, of all philosophy was really found. This point, indeed, is essentially and of necessity *the subjective, our own consciousness*. For this alone is and remains that which is immediate; everything else, be it what it may, is first mediated and conditioned by consciousness, and therefore dependent on it. It is thus rightly considered that the philosophy of the moderns starts from Descartes as its father. Not long afterwards, Berkeley went farther along this path, and arrived at *idealism* proper; in other words, at the knowledge that what is extended in space, and hence the objective, material world in general, exists as such simply and solely in our *representation*, and that it is false and indeed absurd to attribute to it, *as such*, an existence outside all representation and independent of the knowing subject, and so to assume a matter positively and absolutely existing in itself. But this very correct and deep insight really constitutes the whole of Berkeley's philosophy; in it he had exhausted himself.

Accordingly, true philosophy must at all costs be *idealistic*; indeed, it must be so merely to be honest. For nothing is more certain than that no one ever came out of himself in order to identify himself immediately with things different from him; but everything of which he has certain, sure, and hence immediate knowledge, lies within his consciousness. Beyond this consciousness, therefore, there can be no *immediate* certainty; but the first principles of a science must have

¹ "I think, therefore I am." [Tr.]

such a certainty. It is quite appropriate to the empirical standpoint of all the other sciences to assume the objective world as positively and actually existing; it is not appropriate to the standpoint of philosophy, which has to go back to what is primary and original. *Consciousness* alone is immediately given, hence the basis of philosophy is limited to the facts of consciousness; in other words, philosophy is essentially *idealistic*. Realism, which commends itself to the crude understanding by appearing to be founded on fact, starts precisely from an arbitrary assumption, and is in consequence an empty castle in the air, since it skips or denies the first fact of all, namely that all that we know lies within consciousness. For that the *objective existence* of things is conditioned by a representer of them, and that consequently the objective world exists only *as representation*, is no hypothesis, still less a peremptory pronouncement, or even a paradox put forward for the sake of debate or argument. On the contrary, it is the surest and simplest truth, and a knowledge of it is rendered more difficult only by the fact that it is indeed too simple, and that not everyone has sufficient power of reflection to go back to the first elements of his consciousness of things. There can never be an existence that is objective absolutely and in itself; such an existence, indeed, is positively inconceivable. For the objective, as such, always and essentially has its existence in the consciousness of a subject; it is therefore the representation of this subject, and consequently is conditioned by the subject, and moreover by the subject's forms of representation, which belong to the subject and not to the object.

That the *objective world would exist* even if there existed no knowing being at all, naturally seems at the first onset to be sure and certain, because it can be thought in the abstract, without the contradiction that it carries within itself coming to light. But if we try to *realize* this abstract thought, in other words, to reduce it to representations of perception, from which alone (like everything abstract) it can have content and truth; and if accordingly we attempt to *imagine an objective world without a knowing subject*, then we become aware that what we are imagining at that moment is in truth the opposite of what we intended, namely nothing but just the process in the intellect of a knowing being who perceives an objective world, that is to say, precisely that which we had sought to exclude. For this perceptible and real world is obviously a phenomenon of the brain; and so in the assumption that the world as such might exist independently of all brains there lies a contradiction.

The principal objection to the inevitable and essential *ideality of every object*, the objection which arises distinctly or indistinctly in

everyone, is certainly as follows: Even my own person is object for another, and is therefore that other's representation, and yet I know certainly that I should exist even without that other representing me in his mind. But all other objects also stand in the same relation to his intellect as *I* stand; consequently, they too would exist without his representing them in his mind. The answer to this is as follows: That other being, whose object I am now considering my person to be, is not absolutely *the subject*, but is in the first instance a knowing individual. Therefore, if he too did *not* exist, in fact, even if there existed in general no other knowing being except myself, this would still by no means be the elimination of the *subject* in whose representation alone all objects exist. For I myself am in fact that *subject*, just as is every knowing being. Consequently, in the case here assumed, my person would certainly still exist, but again as representation, namely in my own knowledge. For even by myself it is always known only indirectly, never directly, since all existence as representation is an indirect existence. Thus as *object*, in other words as extended, filling space, and acting, I know my body only in the perception of my brain. This perception is brought about through the senses, and on their data the perceiving understanding carries out its function of passing from the effect to the cause. In this way, by the eye seeing the body, or the hands touching it, the understanding constructs the spatial figure that presents itself in space as my body. In no way, however, are there given to me directly, in some general feeling of the body or in inner self-consciousness, any extension, shape, and activity that would coincide with my inner being itself, and that inner being accordingly requires no other being in whose knowledge it would manifest itself, in order so to exist. On the contrary, that general feeling, just like self-consciousness, exists directly only in relation to the *will*, namely as comfortable or uncomfortable, and as active in the acts of will, which exhibit themselves for external perception as actions of the body. It follows from this that the existence of my person or of my body *as an extended and acting thing* always presupposes a *knowing being* different from it, since it is essentially an existence in the apprehension, in the representation, and hence an existence *for another being*. In fact, it is a phenomenon of the brain, no matter whether the brain in which it exhibits itself belongs to my own person or to another's. In the first case, one's own person is then split up into the knowing and the known, into object and subject, and here, as everywhere, these two face each other inseparable and irreconcilable. Therefore, if my own person, in order to exist as such, always requires a knower, this will apply at any rate just as much to all other objects; and to vindicate for

these an existence independent of knowledge and of the subject of knowledge was the aim of the above objection.

However, it is evident that the existence conditioned through a knowing being is simply and solely existence *in space*, and hence that of a thing extended and acting. This alone is always a known thing, and consequently an existence *for another being*. At the same time, everything that exists in this way may still have an *existence for itself*, for which it requires no subject. This existence by itself, however, cannot be extension and activity (together space-occupation), but is necessarily another kind of being, namely that of a *thing-in-itself*, which, purely as such, can never be *object*. This, therefore, is the answer to the principal objection stated above, and accordingly this objection does not overthrow the fundamental truth that the objectively present and existing world can exist only in the representation, and so only for a subject.

It is also to be noted here that even Kant, at any rate so long as he remained consistent, cannot have thought of any *objects* among his things-in-themselves. For this follows already from the fact that he proved space as well as time to be a mere form of our intuition or perception, which in consequence does not belong to the things-in-themselves. What is not in space or in time cannot be *object*; therefore the being or existence of *things-in-themselves* can no longer be *objective*, but only of quite a different kind, namely a metaphysical being or existence. Consequently, there is already to be found in that Kantian principle also the proposition that the *objective* world exists only as *representation*.

In spite of all that may be said, nothing is so persistently and constantly misunderstood as *idealism*, since it is interpreted as meaning that the *empirical* reality of the external world is denied. On this rests the constant return of the appeal to common sense, which appears in many different turns and guises, for example, as "*fundamental conviction*" in the Scottish school, or as Jacobi's *faith or belief* in the reality of the external world. The external world by no means gives itself, as Jacobi explains, merely on credit; nor is it accepted by us on faith and trust. It gives itself as what it is, and performs directly what it promises. It must be remembered that Jacobi set up such a credit system of the world, and was lucky enough to impose it on a few professors of philosophy, who for thirty years went on philosophizing about it extensively and at their ease; and that it was this same Jacobi who once denounced Lessing as a Spinozist, and later Schelling as an atheist, and received from the latter the well-known and well-merited reprimand. In accordance with such zeal, by reducing the external world to a matter of faith,

he wanted merely to open a little door for faith in general, and to prepare the credit for that which was afterwards actually to be offered on credit; just as if, to introduce paper money, we tried to appeal to the fact that the value of the ringing coin depended merely on the stamp the State put on it. In his philosopheme on the reality of the external world assumed on faith, Jacobi is precisely the "transcendental realist playing the part of the empirical idealist," whom Kant censured in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, first edition, p. 369.

True idealism, on the other hand, is not the empirical, but the transcendental. It leaves the *empirical* reality of the world untouched, but adheres to the fact that all *object*, and hence the empirically real in general, is conditioned by the *subject* in a twofold manner. In the first place it is conditioned *materially*, or as *object* in general, since an objective existence is conceivable only in face of a subject and as the representation of this subject. In the second place, it is conditioned *formally*, since the *mode and manner* of the object's existence, in other words, of its being represented (space, time, causality), proceed from the subject, and are predisposed in the subject. Therefore immediately connected with simple or *Berkeleyan* idealism, which concerns the *object in general*, is *Kantian* idealism, which concerns the specially given *mode and manner* of objective existence. This proves that the whole of the material world with its bodies in space, extended and, by means of time, having causal relations with one another, and everything attached to this—all this is not something existing *independently* of our mind, but something that has its fundamental presuppositions in our brain-functions, *by means of* which and *in which* alone is *such* an objective order of things possible. For time, space, and causality, on which all those real and objective events rest, are themselves nothing more than functions of the brain; so that, therefore, this unchangeable *order* of things, affording the criterion and the clue to their empirical *reality*, itself comes first from the brain, and has its credentials from that alone. Kant has discussed this thoroughly and in detail; though he does not mention the brain, but says "the faculty of knowledge." He has even attempted to prove that that objective order in time, space, causality, matter, and so on, on which all the events of the real world ultimately rest, cannot even be *conceived*, when closely considered, as a self-existing order, i.e., an order of things-in-themselves, or as something absolutely objective and positively existing; for if we attempt to think it out to the end, it leads to contradictions. To demonstrate this was the purpose of the antinomies; in the appendix to my work,² how-

² "Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy" at the end of volume 1. [Tr.]

ever, I have demonstrated the failure of the attempt. On the other hand, the Kantian teaching, even without the antinomies, leads to the insight that things and their whole mode and manner of existence are inseparably associated with our consciousness of them. Therefore he who has clearly grasped this soon reaches the conviction that the assumption that things exist as such, even outside and independently of our consciousness, is really absurd. Thus are we so deeply immersed in time, space, causality, and in the whole regular course of experience resting on these; we (and in fact even the animals) are so completely at home, and know how to find our way in experience from the very beginning. This would not be possible if our intellect were one thing and things another; but it can be explained only from the fact that the two constitute a whole; that the intellect itself creates that order, and exists only for things, but that things also exist only for it.

But even apart from the deep insight and discernment revealed only by the Kantian philosophy, the inadmissible character of the assumption of absolute *realism*, clung to so obstinately, can indeed be directly demonstrated, or at any rate felt, by the mere elucidation of its meaning through considerations such as the following. According to realism, the world is supposed to exist, as we know it, independently of this knowledge. Now let us once remove from it all knowing beings, and thus leave behind only inorganic and vegetable nature. Rock, tree, and brook are there, and the blue sky; sun, moon, and stars illuminate this world, as before, only of course to no purpose, since there exists no eye to see such things. But then let us subsequently put into the world a knowing being. That world then presents itself *once more* in his brain, and repeats itself inside that brain exactly as it was previously outside it. Thus to the *first* world a *second* has been added, which, although completely separated from the first, resembles it to a nicety. Now the *subjective* world of this perception is constituted in *subjective*, known space exactly as the *objective* world is in *objective*, infinite space. But the subjective world still has an advantage over the objective, namely the knowledge that that external space is infinite; in fact, it can state beforehand most minutely and accurately the full conformity to law of all the relations in that space which are possible and not yet actual, and it does not need to examine them first. It can state just as much about the course of time, as also about the relation of cause and effect which governs the changes in outer space. I think that, on closer consideration, all this proves absurd enough, and thus leads to the conviction that that absolutely *objective* world outside the head, independent of it and *prior* to all knowledge, which we at first

imagined we had conceived, was really no other than the second world already known *subjectively*, the world of the representation, and that it is this alone which we are actually capable of conceiving. Accordingly the assumption is automatically forced on us that the world, as we know it, exists only for our knowledge, and consequently in the *representation* alone, and not once again outside that representation.* In keeping with this assumption, then, the thing-in-itself, in other words, that which exists independently of our knowledge and of all knowledge, is to be regarded as something quite different from the *representation* and all its attributes, and hence from objectivity in general. What this is, will afterwards be the theme of our second book.

On the other hand, the controversy about the reality of the external world, considered in § 5 of our first volume, rests on the assumption, just criticized, of an objective and a subjective world both in *space*, and on the impossibility, arising in the case of this presupposition, of a transition, a bridge, between the two. On this controversy I have to make the following remarks.

Subjective and objective do not form a continuum. That of which we are immediately conscious is bounded by the skin, or rather by the extreme ends of the nerves proceeding from the cerebral system. Beyond this lies a world of which we have no other knowledge than that gained through pictures in our mind. Now the question is whether and to what extent a world existing independently of us corresponds to these pictures. The relation between the two could be brought about only by means of the law of causality, for this law alone leads from something given to something quite different from it. This law itself, however, has first of all to substantiate its validity. Now it must be either of *objective* or of *subjective* origin; but in either case it lies on one bank or the other, and therefore cannot serve as a bridge. If, as Locke and Hume assumed, it is *a posteriori*, and hence drawn from experience, it is of *objective* origin; it then

* Here I specially recommend the passage in Lichtenberg's *Vermischte Schriften* (Göttingen, 1801, Vol. II, page 12 *seq.*): "Euler says in his letters on various subjects of natural science (Vol. II, p. 228), that it would thunder and lighten just as well, even if there existed no human being whom the lightning could strike. It is a very common expression, but I must confess that it has never been easy for me to grasp it completely. It always seems to me as if the concept of *being* were something borrowed from our thinking, and that if there are no longer any sentient and thinking creatures, then also there is nothing any more."

* [Footnotes so marked represent additions made by Schopenhauer in his interleaved copy of the third edition between its appearance in 1859 and his death in 1860. Tr.]

itself belongs to the external world in question, and therefore cannot vouch for the reality of that world. For then, according to Locke's method, the law of causality would be demonstrated from experience, and the reality of experience from the law of causality. If, on the other hand, it is given *a priori*, as Kant more correctly taught, then it is of *subjective* origin; and so it is clear that with it we always remain in the *subjective*. For the only thing actually given *empirically* in the case of perception is the occurrence of a sensation in the organ of sense. The assumption that this sensation, even only in general, must have a *cause* rests on a law that is rooted in the form of our knowledge, in other words, in the functions of our brain. The origin of this law is therefore just as subjective as is that sensation itself. The *cause* of the given sensation, assumed as a result of this law, immediately manifests itself in perception as *object*, having space and time as the form of its appearance. But again, even *these* forms themselves are of entirely subjective origin, for they are the mode and manner of our faculty of perception. That transition from the sensation to its cause, which, as I have repeatedly shown, lies at the foundation of all sense-perception, is certainly sufficient for indicating to us the empirical presence in space and time of an empirical object, and is therefore fully satisfactory for practical life. But it is by no means sufficient for giving us information about the existence and real inner nature of the phenomena that arise for us in such a way, or rather of their intelligible substratum. Therefore, the fact that, on the occasion of certain sensations occurring in my organs of sense, there arises in my head a *perception* of things extended in space, permanent in time, and causally operative, by no means justifies me in assuming that such things also exist in themselves, in other words, that they exist with such properties absolutely belonging to them, independently of my head and outside it. This is the correct conclusion of the *Kantian* philosophy. It is connected with an earlier result of Locke which is just as correct, and very much easier to understand. Thus, although, as is allowed by Locke's teaching, external things are positively assumed to be the causes of the sensations, there cannot be any *resemblance* at all between the *sensation*, in which the *effect* consists, and the objective *nature* or *quality* of the *cause* that gives rise to this sensation. For the sensation, as organic function, is above all determined by the very artificial and complicated nature of our sense-organs; thus it is merely stimulated by the external cause, but is then perfected entirely in accordance with its own laws, and hence is wholly subjective. Locke's philosophy was the criticism of the functions of sense; but Kant has furnished the criticism of the functions of the brain. But to all this we still have