

century. This assertion might justify itself by pointing to a number of new terms introduced into philosophical language referring to the subject in question. From this point of view Kant's critical labours have been appraised and represented as the starting-point for the later contributions of Continental thinkers; whereas in this country the earlier studies dealing with this subject are more directly connected with the writings of Bacon, Locke, and Hume, to which Kant himself was likewise largely indebted.

During the last years of the eighteenth century Fichte had introduced the problem of knowledge under the new term and conception of *Wissenschaftslehre*,¹ professing that such was no more than a general theory of methodical knowledge (termed in German *Wissen-*

3.
Fichte's
Wissen-
schaftslehre.

¹ The term *Wissenschaftslehre* appears for the first time in 1794, in Fichte's correspondence with Reinhold, and had probably been fixed upon during a course of Lectures which he delivered at Zürich before a small circle of friends interested in his philosophy. These included Lavater, the physiognomist. Shortly after that time Fichte was installed at Weimar in the chair vacated by Reinhold, and there he published his first tract "On the Conception of *Wissenschaftslehre* or the so-called Philosophy" as a syllabus for the attenders of his Lectures. It was republished four years later with a new explanatory preface. In this tract he defines his aim as being to give to philosophy, as a science, unity and certainty, or necessary connection. This undertaking, the success of which he hypothetically supposes, and which he intends to establish, should warrant a new name in order to distinguish it

from existing sciences and from existing philosophy as a preliminary investigation. Should such a fundamental science be possible, it would deserve, he says, to "drop the name which it hitherto bore in consequence of a by no means exaggerated modesty. . . . The nation which should invent such a science would indeed deserve to give it a name in its own tongue, and it might well be called *die Wissenschaft* (i.e., science *par excellence*) or *Wissenschaftslehre*" (Fichte, 'Werke,' vol. i. p. 44). In a note he also indicates that through such an achievement the nation and its language would attain to a distinct preponderance over other languages. In passing it may be noticed that not the term chosen by Fichte but the later one of *Erkenntnisstheorie* has in a manner attained to the leading position he indicates, though both terms share the disadvantage of not being easily and intelligibly translatable into other languages.