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**Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation***

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## 1. Introduction

### 1

Many today are led to Schopenhauer by their interest in Nietzsche. I do indeed think that it is impossible to have an adequate understanding of Nietzsche without knowing *The World as Will and Representation*. This is hardly a new claim. Many years ago Georg Simmel published his *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche* (1907). In 1998 appeared a collection of essays edited by Christopher Janaway, *Schopenhauer As Nietzsche's Educator*, and in 2008 Paul A. Swift published his *Becoming Nietzsche: Early Reflections on Democritus, Schopenhauer, and Kant*. And yet, as the Nietzsche literature demonstrates, it remains unfashionable to group Nietzsche and Schopenhauer so closely together. The great vogue Nietzsche is currently enjoying has not meant a comparable interest in Schopenhauer's thought.

In the English speaking countries interest in Schopenhauer has often been linked to his influence on the young Wittgenstein. See e.g. A. Phillips Griffiths, "Wittgenstein, Schopenhauer, and Ethics" (in *Understanding Wittgenstein*, ed. Vesey). I know of two books dealing with the topic, one a dissertation I directed, *Genius and Talent: Schopenhauer's Influence on Wittgenstein's Early Philosophy* by David Avraham Weiner, the other a German study focusing on the problem of solipsism: *Wittgenstein und Schopenhauer: Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung und Kritik des Solipsismus* (Hochschultexte Philosophie) by Ernst Michael Lange (1992). Much more work remains to be done. Schopenhauer's influence on Wittgenstein is not confined to the young Wittgenstein.

Another's source of interest has been the affinity between Schopenhauer's philosophy and Eastern thought. Yet another, the way he anticipated Freud. I know of at least five books on the topic, four in German, one in French.

There are a number of more general books in English that have generated some discussion: I should mention Christopher Janaway, *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy* (1989); *Schopenhauer* (The Routledge Philosophers, 2005) by Julian Young, which he had preceded with *Willing and Unwilling: a Study in the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer* (1987); Michael Tanner's very introductory *Schopenhauer* in *The Great*

Philosophers Series (Routledge); *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* by Bryan Magee (revised ed. 1997) , well received, although I gave the first edition a rather critical review in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (1983). In English, not to go into the German literature, there are also some older studies by Frederick Copleston (1946), *Arthur Schopenhauer: Philosopher of Pessimism*, Patrick Gardiner (1971), David Hamlyn in the *Arguments of the Philosophers* series, and Michael Fox's anthology *Schopenhauer. His Philosophical Achievement*. None of these are weighty enough to merit much attention. More interesting and certainly solid and very readable is Rüdiger Safranski's intellectual biography, which is available in an English translation. But Schopenhauer is a clear writer, even when his views may be difficult to accept. So I recommend that you concentrate on his text and not on the secondary literature.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Some Publications in English**

John E. Atwell, *Schopenhauer: The Human Character* , Temple University Pres, 1990

David E. Cartwright, *Historical Dictionary of Schopenhauer's Philosophy* (Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies and Movements) Scarecrow Press, 2004

David E. Cartwright, *Schopenhauer: A Biography*. Cambridge University Press.

Frederick Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer: Philosopher of Pessimism*, 1946.

Patrick L Gardiner, *Schopenhauer*, Penguin 1971.

D.W. Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer* (Arguments of the Philosophers) 1999.

Barbara Hannan, *The Riddle of the World: A Reconsideration of Schopenhauer's Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2009

Arthur Hübscher, et al., *Philosophy of Schopenhauer in Its Intellectual Context: Thinker Against the Tide* (Studies in German Thought and History, Vol. 11) Mellen, 1990

Dale Jacquette, ed., *Schopenhauer, Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and the Arts), 1996

Dale Jacquette, *Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Continental European Philosophy), 2005.

Christopher Janaway, *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy*, Oxford, 1989

Christopher Janaway, *Schopenhauer: A Very Short Introduction* Oxford, 2002 .

How is the comparative lack of interest in Schopenhauer to be explained? There is the recurring charge that Schopenhauer is a shallow philosopher, not in need of serious philosophical study (Michael Tanner wrote this in his TLS review of the book by Magee). Such neglect can indeed cite Heidegger and Kaufmann, who both downgrade the significance of Nietzsche's obvious debt to Schopenhauer. Or Richard Schacht. To some extent it is supported by Nietzsche's own self-presentation. I agree with those who, like Julian Young in his *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*, insist on the deep and lifelong

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Christopher Janaway, *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer As Nietzsche's Educator*, 1999

Christopher Janaway (Editor) *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer* (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy) 1999

Michael Kelly, Kant: *Kant's philosophy as rectified by Schopenhauer*, 1909

Michael Kelly, *Kant's Ethics and Schopenhauer's Criticism*, 1910

Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, revised edition, Oxford, 1997

G. Steven Neeley, *Schopenhauer: A Consistent Reading*, Mellen, 2003)

Rüdiger Safranski, *Schopenhauer and the Wild Years of Philosophy*

Georg Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*. University of Illinois Press, 1991

Paul A. Swift, *Becoming Nietzsche: Early Reflections on Democritus, Schopenhauer, and Kant*, Lexington Books, 2008

Michael Tanner, *The Great Philosophers* (The Great Philosophers Series) Routledge. 1999.

David Avraham Weiner Wittgenstein: Genius and Talent: Schopenhauer's Influence on Wittgenstein's Early Philosophy

Julian P. Young. *Willing and Unwilling: A Study in the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer* Springer 2009

Julian P. Young, *Schopenhauer* (The Routledge Philosophers), 2005

influence of Schopenhauer, where that influence takes the form of a lifelong and never quite successful struggle with and against Schopenhauer.

I, too, was led to Schopenhauer by my interest in Nietzsche. Much that seemed unclear in Nietzsche became clearer after reading Schopenhauer. That goes especially for the doctrine of the eternal recurrence. All this is not to say that I want to treat Schopenhauer here as an introduction to Nietzsche. Schopenhauer, as this seminar should show, deserves our attention in his own right. But what then is his importance?

## 2

There are of course many possible answers. What I find most significant is that **Schopenhauer stood the traditional philosophical anthropology on its head**. Thereby he became the founder of a new anthropology, where by "philosophical anthropology" I mean no more than a reasoned account of human being.

What do I mean here by "traditional anthropology"? What I have in mind is an understanding of human being that finds its first developed expression in Plato's works and has continued and continues to shape philosophical discussion. I should perhaps say that **Schopenhauer stood Platonism on its head**.

## 3

What are the main characteristics of "Platonism" as I am here using it?

1. Human being is essentially temporal. To be sure, plant and animal, too are temporal beings. But to such beings their being is not a problem. The human being exists at a distance from itself, is troubled by his own being. The human being is therefore the *animal metaphysicum*.

The wisdom of nature speaks out of the peaceful glance of the animals, since in them will and the intellect are not separated widely enough for them to be capable of being astonished at each other when they meet again. Thus in them the whole phenomenon is still firmly attached to the stem of nature from which it has sprung, and partakes of the unconscious omniscience of the great mother. Only after the inner being of nature (the will-to-live in its objectification) has ascended, vigorously and cheerfully,

through the two spheres of unconscious beings, and then through the long and broad series of animals, does it finally attain to reflection for the first time with the appearance of reason (*Vernunft*), that is, in man. It then marvels at its own works, and asks itself what it itself is. And its wonder is the more serious, as here it stands for the first time consciously face to face with *death*, and besides the finiteness of all existence the vanity and fruitlessness of all effort force themselves on it more or less. Therefore with this reflection and astonishment arises the *need for metaphysics* that is peculiar to man alone; accordingly he is the *animal metaphysicum*. (II, 160)<sup>2</sup>

Schopenhauer sketches here something like a theory of evolution. In human beings nature becomes conscious of itself. But this makes us human beings concerned about our being, about the precariousness of human existence, especially about our mortality. Quite a bit here was later to become important to Heidegger.

2. As the being that has in a sense fallen out of nature, the human being exists beyond itself. Unlike plant or animal, the human being does not simply live in the present, but projects himself into the past in memory, and, more importantly, into the future in desire, hope, expectation, and care. In this sense human being is essentially incomplete, completing itself only in death, but then of course we are no longer. Constitutive of human being is a sense of **incompleteness**, of lacking the whole, of lacking true satisfaction. As essentially desiring beings, we are never truly at peace with ourselves. Here lies the root of Schopenhauer's pessimism. Constitutive of human being so understood would seem to be a certain **self-alienation**. We have difficulty accepting ourselves as the beings we are. And **at the root of this alienation is time** itself.

3. Plato gives one account of this. The human being, he suggests has fallen from being, our true home, into becoming. We are exiles. This fall may thus be understood as a fall from our essence, which belongs to being. But this loss of home is not so complete as to amount to a total forgetting. The human being is haunted by this ideal and thus by

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<sup>2</sup> All page references in the text are, unless otherwise indicated, to Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 vols., trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966).

the desire for being. This desire Plato calls love, **eros** (*Symposium*). Love strives thus for the negation of time. As such it is inseparable from death. Socrates thus teaches both, the art of loving, the *ars amandi*, and the art of dying, the *ars moriendi* (*Symposium* and *Phaedo*).

4. Being here is given precedence over becoming. The goal of human being is to be. The **idea of satisfaction** haunts us. To be satisfied is to be complete. Nothing is outstanding. Inseparable from the ideal of satisfaction is **the desire to negate time**. The ideal of satisfaction demands that negation. In his *Zarathustra* Nietzsche will speak of the **ill will against time**.

5. Implicit in this view is a downgrading of the body. If in its essence, human being belongs to being, as embodied being it belongs to time. But if the former is right, the body cannot belong to the human being essentially. Man is said **to have a body, not to be his body**.

In epistemology this transcendence of the subject over the body has long been taken for granted. It was given a new turn by Descartes' determination of human being as first of all *res cogitans*. To a considerable degree it would seem to remain part of our common sense. Take our attitude to sex. Are we not first of all persons, happening to have a body, happening to be gendered? Or are we perhaps essentially gendered?

Consider in this connection the metaphor of the coat for the body offered by Plato in the *Phaedo*! Or the recurring understanding of the body as a source of shame (cf. Augustine, Sartre)!

6. Yet is this view not challenged by the very nature of experience? Are we not, as Heidegger was to insist, essentially **beings-in-the-world**? We find ourselves *in*, not *before* the world, as before a picture. The embodied self is the measure of the corporeal world. Are we not first of all desiring, wanting, rather than pure thinking beings? And does this not force us to take the body more seriously than philosophy traditionally has tended to do?

Consider in this connection the bifurcation of human being that we find, in different ways, reflected in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. In both the emphasis is on **detached, objective understanding**. Will and desire are here subordinated to spirit. Schopenhauer, as we shall see, will insist on the



reverse. Spirit must be subordinated to will. Such subordination, as we shall see, prepares the way for both Darwin and Freud. Schopenhauer presents us with what I shall call an iceberg image of human being. What the tradition saw was only the tip of the iceberg. To get a fuller understanding of the human being we have to attend to the whole iceberg; that is to say we have to account for pre- and subconscious regions. It is in **this inversion** that I see **Schopenhauer's most significant contribution to our modern self-understanding**. In this respect Schopenhauer is a precursor of Freud, as Freud himself recognized, indeed also of Heidegger, although Heidegger refused to acknowledge that.

## 4

Where then does Nietzsche's contribution lie? Here only a very brief and inevitably superficial answer: Schopenhauer, while he broke with the traditional understanding of human being, continued to hold on to the ideal of satisfaction. That is to say, **no revolution in ethics**, broadly understood, **corresponded to the revolution in his philosophical anthropology**. As certainly as for Sartre, for Schopenhauer the human being is a vain passion. Our longing for satisfaction must go in principle unsatisfied. This is the foundation of Schopenhauer's **pessimism**, as it is also the foundation of his **atheism: God**, where God is thought as the guarantor of final satisfaction **is dead**.

Nietzsche accepts and underscores this diagnosis. But he tries to escape from Schopenhauer's pessimism by **challenging the ideal of satisfaction**. But what is to take its place? In this context Nietzsche's affirmation of strife, of **eris**, becomes important. At issue is a changed attitude to time. Platonism is born of an inability to accept linear time. And on this point Nietzsche would seem to agree with Plato: **linear time and nihilism are inseparable**. **Nietzsche's new ethics demands thus a new metaphysics**: the metaphysics of the will to power and the eternal recurrence.

## 5

Let me return to Schopenhauer. Before beginning with *The World as Will and Representation* next time, just a few words about Schopenhauer's life. Schopenhauer was born on February 22, 1788 in the free city of Danzig (now Gdansk) on the Baltic, where his father, Heinrich Floris Schopenhauer, was a prominent, wealthy merchant. His

mother had literary ambitions. Her novels, essays, travelogues gave her a reputation in her time. In March 1793 the city of Danzig was seized by Prussia and the cosmopolitan Schopenhauers moved to Hamburg, which continued to be a free merchant city. The years in Hamburg brought Schopenhauer at a very early date into contact with some of the leading figures of the time. Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton were guests, as were the celebrated poet Klopstock and the painter Tischbein. In Hamburg he went to a pietistic school and made **pietism's** view of life as a vale of tears his own.

His father, hoping that his son would follow him and become a merchant, saw to it that Schopenhauer learned other languages. For two years (1798 - 1800) he was sent to France, to business associates of his father, to perfect his French. In 1803 his parents were planning to travel for an extended period of time and they promised that young Arthur could accompany them if he gave up his scholarly ambitions and promised to follow his father's career. Many of the impressions of that journey, which covered Belgium, France, England, Switzerland, and Vienna were negative, such as galley slaves in Toulon and visits to prisons. Pessimism seems to have been deeply implanted in Schopenhauer before he developed it into a philosophical position. Upon his return to Germany in 1805 he began his apprenticeship with a wealthy merchant, dutiful, yet with many regrets.

A few months later his father died, perhaps a suicide (drowning). His mother, interested in strengthening her ties to leading intellectuals, decided to move from Hamburg to Weimar, where hers was soon the leading salon. Goethe and Wieland now belonged to her circle. Arthur could not follow right away. But his mother no longer insisted that he become a merchant, and let him go to the gymnasium in Gotha, where after only a few months he was kicked out (1807); one reason appears to have been that he made fun of his teachers. He continued his studies in Weimar with tutors. When he was twenty-one he received an inheritance that made it possible for him to live without having to earn a living.

In 1809 we find him in Göttingen, at the university, studying medicine and the natural sciences. In the second semester he transfers to the humanities. The philosopher Schulze told him to concentrate on Plato and Kant, not bad advice. These two philosophers certainly helped shape *The World as Will and Representation*.

Schopenhauer has often been accused of having forced them together in an altogether unsatisfactory way. You will have to judge for yourself.

In 1811 he goes to Berlin, where he hears Fichte and Schleiermacher. Initially impressed by Fichte, he is soon fed up with a philosophy that seemed to him just that much verbal play. He was more impressed by the professors of classical philology and the sciences. In 1813 he earned his doctorate from the university of Jena with his dissertation on *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*. In spite of what Schopenhauer says, it is not an absolutely indispensable introduction to *The World as Will and Representation*, but it is helpful.

By then he had left Berlin. The Napoleonic Wars had caused him to seek refuge in Thuringia, first in Weimar, then in Rudolstadt, where the dissertation was written in a local inn. On October 2 he received his degree from the university in Jena. 500 copies of the work were printed. 10 years later 350 remained unsold. But Goethe read it, liked it, saw relationships between his own ideas, especially his color theory, and those of the young philosopher, although increasingly there were tensions. Interesting are the verses Goethe wrote in Schopenhauer's album:

*Willst du dich des Lebens freuen,  
So mußst der Welt du Werth verleihen.*

If you want to enjoy life,  
You first have to grant worth to the world.

It was in Weimar that Schopenhauer made the acquaintance with Indian thought, which was to become, together with Plato and Kant, the third great influence on his thought. Friedrich Meier, a disciple of Herder, introduced him to Eastern thought. He encountered the Upanishads in a Latin translation of a Persian translation.

Disapproving of what struck him as the frivolous life of his mother, he was finally thrown out by her in 1814, never to see her again. Schopenhauer left Weimar for Dresden, where he spent the next four years, working on minor pieces, including material, such as aphorisms, relating to *The World as Will and Representation* and on an

essay on Goethe's color theory that came to its defense against Newton, but also included criticisms. *The World as Will and Representation* itself was written in just one year. It appeared in 1818. A trip to Italy followed. The company in which he had invested his money went bankrupt, but Schopenhauer proved himself a clever and rather ruthless businessman and came out alright.

In 1820 Schopenhauer attempted to establish himself as a lecturer of philosophy in Berlin. He gave his *Probevorlesung* on March 13. On this occasion he had his first run-in with Hegel. Schopenhauer chose for his course the hours of Hegel's lectures, a characteristic and disastrous decision. Only 5 students showed up. In the second semester the number is too small to warrant giving the course. *The World as Will and Representation* is similarly unsuccessful. In the first 14 months not even 100 copies are sold. Hardly anyone takes note of Schopenhauer, who is thinking about getting married to a young chorus girl, Caroline Richter or Medon, as she called herself after the father of her illegitimate son. Schopenhauer was to have an intermittent sexual relationship with her, beginning in 1821 — she was 19 — which lasted for ten years. Another trip to Italy followed, then a stay in Switzerland, and times spent in various towns in Germany, including a year in Munich. He wanted to translate Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* into German, also Hume's writings on religion (Hume was his stylistic model), and Giordano Bruno, who was burnt by the Inquisition. But publishers weren't interested. He still had hopes to establish himself at some German university, perhaps at Würzburg or at Heidelberg, but without success: the evaluations the universities received were devastating. In 1825 he is back in Berlin, thinking of translating Kant into English. The only translation project he completed is Gracian's *The Oracle*, a book of aphorisms. The number of his friends dwindled. He still thought of marriage, even proposed marriage to the 17 year old Flora Weiss in 1831, who felt disgusted by the old man. That year he left Berlin because the cholera was threatening. Hegel was to die of the epidemic.

Schopenhauer moved to Frankfurt, arrived there seriously depressed. He had hoped that Caroline Medon would join him there, but he would not let her bring her illegitimate son along, and nothing came of the invitation. Schopenhauer would settle in Frankfurt for good in 1833, after a year in Mannheim. He was not to leave the city for the rest of his life, except for a four day excursion on the Rhine and a few day excursions

into the surrounding countryside. In 1836 he has his book on *The Will in Nature* published. 500 copies were printed. Once again, no one took notice. Hegel is called a charlatan in the preface. In 1837 and 1839 he entered competitions held by the Danish and Norwegian Societies for the Sciences. He won the first with his essay *On the Freedom of the Will*. The second essay, *On the Basis of Morality* did not win, although it was the only essay submitted. He was told that there were too many unwarranted attacks on great philosophers. In 1841 he published both essays as *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*. In 1840 - 1843 he writes the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation* and finds his first disciples, Dorgut and Frauenstädt. But in 1844, when the second volume is published in an edition of 750 copies, together with the first, in an edition of 500, there is again no success. He does gain two new students. In 1851 his *Parerga and Paralipomena* appear, i.e. subordinate remarks and things omitted from the main work. But more than any other major philosopher, Schopenhauer was a one book writer.

With the revolution of 1848 things begin to change for him. That revolution put an end to the confidence shared by so many in the first half of the 19th century that the progress of reason and the scientific, social, and political revolution it would bring about, would mean the realization of hopes that had haunted mankind from the beginning. The sudden popularity of Schopenhauer shortly after 1850 can be seen in the context of this disenchantment, especially of the German intelligentsia. But perhaps such disenchantment should not be overemphasized: the hard sciences were putting the kind of idealism represented by Hegel on the defensive. Materialism was dominant in philosophy at mid-century. As we shall see, the distance that separates Schopenhauer from such a materialism is not so very great. Whatever the reason, suddenly Schopenhauer's works begin to sell. In 1854 he gets his first royalties since 1818. In Bonn and Breslau courses are taught on his philosophy. In 1853 John Oxenford writes a critical, but nevertheless appreciative article on him in the *Westminster Review*. In 1854 Richard Wagner sends him the text of the *Ring* with the dedication, "in veneration and gratitude." Wagner had found in Schopenhauer the only philosopher, who, he thought, understood music and who had helped him to a more profound understanding of his own *Ring*. In 1856 Leipzig University offered a prize for the best exposition and criticism of

Schopenhauer's system. Schopenhauer died peacefully in 1860, leaving most of his money to invalid soldiers who had been wounded in the unrest of 1848. Caroline Medon, and some poor relatives in Danzig also received larger sums.

## 6

I find the single-mindedness with which Schopenhauer pursued his work, despite so many years of hostility and rejection, impressive, as did Nietzsche, who devoted the third of the *Untimely Meditations* to Schopenhauer, *Schopenhauer as Educator*. What he had in mind was not so much the content of Schopenhauer's philosophy as the style of his philosophizing and living, that single-minded dedication to the truth as he saw it, which refused to adjust itself to the philosophical establishment. The very fact that Schopenhauer never succeeded in establishing himself as a university professor, that he could not support himself by his philosophy, placed him and his philosophical style and thought at a distance from academic philosophy, made him peripheral, even as it gave him a freedom and independence, paid for with a terrifying loneliness. Schopenhauer must indeed have experienced himself as an untimely thinker in Nietzsche's sense.

This is communicated by the three prefaces to *The World as Will and Representation*. Schopenhauer knew that the philosophical climate was against him. The tone of these prefaces tells us quite a bit about Schopenhauer and his relationship to the philosophical establishment, as it then existed.

But most readers have already grown angry with impatience, and have burst into a reproach kept back with difficulty for so long. Yet how can I dare to submit a book to the public under demands and conditions of which the first two are presumptuous and quite immodest [i.e. that the book must be read twice, and that Schopenhauer's dissertation, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: a Philosophical Essay*, which is said to function as the introduction to *The World as Will and Representation*, be read first] and this at a time when there is so general an abundance of characteristic ideas that in Germany alone such ideas are made common property through the press every year, in three thousand substantial, original, and absolutely indispensable works, as well a

innumerable periodicals, and even daily papers; at a time when in particular there is not the slightest deficiency of wholly original and profound philosophers, but in Germany alone there are more of them living simultaneously than several successive centuries have had to show? How are we to reach the end, asks the indignant reader, if we must set to work on a book with so much trouble and detail? (I, xvi)

Schopenhauer warns the reader: this is a troublesome book. Perhaps you had better leave it alone. — I invite you to translate the situation he describes into the present. The philosophical world has of course greatly expanded in the meantime. And compare the philosophers he must have been thinking of with the philosophers you would be thinking of, were you to rewrite the passage for today!

The ending of this preface is characteristic:

I am afraid, however, that even so I shall not be let off. The reader who has got so far as the preface and is put off by that, has paid money for the book, and wants to know how he is to be compensated. My last refuge now is to remind him that he knows of various ways of using the book without precisely reading it. It can, like many another, fill a gap in a library, where, neatly bound, it is sure to look well. Or he can lay it on the dressing-table or tea-table of his learned lady friend. Or finally he can review it; this is assuredly the best course of all, and the one I especially advise. (I, xvii)

Unfortunately for Schopenhauer, nobody appears to have heeded this last piece of advice. The book was ignored. And Schopenhauer may have expected this, as the conclusion of the preface suggests:

And so, after allowing myself a joke to which in this generally ambivalent life hardly a page can be too serious to grant a place, I put my book forth in profound seriousness, confident that, sooner or later, it will reach those for whom alone it can be addressed. For the rest, I am resigned in patience to the fact that the same fate will befall it in full measure which has always fallen to the truth in every branch of knowledge, in the most important branch most of all. To truth only a brief celebration of victory

is allowed between the two long periods during which it is condemned as paradoxical or disparaged as trivial. The author of truth also usually meets with the former fate. But life is short, and truth works far and lives long: let us speak the truth. (I, xvii)

Perhaps it is not surprising that given the tone of this preface, the book should have met with neglect. Does not Schopenhauer insist that what one expects and says and the truth belong to very different dimensions? There was of course at this time a very lively and timely philosophy, honored and supported by the state, a philosophy that not surprisingly came out with a defense of that state and its institution. Schopenhauer attacks that philosophy in the preface to the second edition:

Indeed, this is just the curse of this world of want and need, that everything must serve and slave for these. Therefore it is not constituted that any noble and sublime endeavor, like that after light and truth, can thrive in it unhindered, and exist for its own sake. But even when such an endeavor has once been able to assert itself, and the idea of it is thus introduced, material interests and personal aims will at once take possession of it to make it their tool or their mask. Accordingly, after Kant had brought philosophy once more into repute, it was bound to become very soon the tool of political aims from above and of personal aims from below: though, to be accurate, not philosophy, but its double that passes for it. (I, xviii-xix)

Philosophy has become a profession like other professions. One can live of it. Even feed a family. But just this professionalization of philosophy is a corruptive force. For to get ahead in the profession you have to abide by its rules and expectations.

Now if governments make philosophy the means to their political ends, then scholars see in professorships a trade that nourishes the outer man just as does any other. (I, xix)

At issue is the freedom that Schopenhauer takes to be essential to doing philosophy. That freedom is endangered when philosophy comes to be considered a profession with well defined expectations and whose members need to live up to the standards of what their



peers have come to accept as good philosophy. That originality will be discouraged by such a professionalization is evident.

Therefore whoever does not comply with those aims, be it even the most important and extraordinary thing in their department, is either condemned, or, where this seems precarious, suppressed by being unanimously ignored. Look only at their concerted indignation at pantheism: will any simpleton believe this proceeds from conviction. How could philosophy, degraded to become a means of earning one's bread, generally fail to degenerate into sophistry. (I, xx)

Pantheism had been politically incorrect ever since the pantheism controversy of the preceding century. When Schopenhauer speaks of sophistry he is thinking above all of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, that "intellectual Caliban," (xxi – a) as he calls him. Philosophy, at least as represented by German idealism, is for Schopenhauer an example of language gone on a rampage, language misused. And here Schopenhauer's connection with later attacks on philosophy, such as Wittgenstein's in the *Philosophical Investigations* should be kept in mind:

Accordingly, in all the German universities we see the cherished mediocrity straining to bring about from its own resources, and indeed in accord with a prescribed standard and aim, the philosophy that still does not exist at all; a spectacle at which it would be almost cruel to mock. (I, xxiv)

Schopenhauer concluded that preface with another attack on academic philosophy, to which his own philosophy would have to appear as a threat.

One thing at issue in the confrontation with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche is philosophy itself — its autonomy and its relationship to society and the state.

Next time I would like to begin with par. 1.

## 2. Perception and Understanding

### 1

In the first of his three prefaces Schopenhauer calls attention to the thinkers to whom he feels most indebted. He mentions Plato and the Upanishads, but first of all he points to Kant. Indeed it is in their departure from Kant that Schopenhauer sees the most serious fault of the German idealists.

The influence of Kant is obvious when we read the very first sentences:

“The world is my representation”: this is a truth valid with reference to every living and knowing being, although man alone can bring it into reflective, abstract consciousness. If he really does so, philosophical discernment has dawned on him. It then becomes clear and certain to him that he does not know a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world around him is there only as representation, in other words, only in reference to another thing, namely that which represents, and this is himself. (3)

The statement must be read carefully: how Kantian is it? Consider especially

It then becomes clear and certain to him that he does not know a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth,

There is a rather un-Kantian emphasis on **the mediation of the body**: I do not know the sun except through the mediating eye; I do not know the earth except through the mediating hand. Several points are important here:

1. Things are **never given in isolation**, but **only in relation to other representations**.
2. My body occupies a special place among these things. There is a sense in which **the embodied self is the measure of all things**.
3. What I see is always only the appearance of objects, where the object is the cause of the appearance. I see the sun because the sun acts on my eyes.

The point is further developed in par. 4.

The first, simplest, ever-present manifestation of understanding is perception of the actual world. This is in every way knowledge of the

cause from the effect and therefore all perception is intellectual. Yet one could never arrive at perception, if some other effect were not immediately known, and thus served as the starting point. But this is the action or effect on animal bodies. To this extent these bodies are the *immediate objects* of the subject; through them the perception of other objects is brought about. The changes experienced by every animal body are immediately known, that is to say, felt; and as this effect is referred at once to its cause, there arises the perception of the latter as an *object*. This relation is no conclusion in abstract concepts, it does not happen through reflection, it is not arbitrary, but is immediate, necessary, and certain. (I, 11-12)

The most obvious difference between Schopenhauer and Kant is the Schopenhauer's claim that **perception is intellectual**. An **immediate understanding of causality** is immediately bound up with it. This has to challenge the Kantian understanding of the difference between sensibility and understanding. I find it difficult not to agree with Schopenhauer's **causal theory of perception**.

All *perception* is not only of the senses, but of the intellect; in other words, *pure knowledge through the understanding of the cause from the effect*. Consequently it presupposes the law of causality, and on the knowledge of this depends all perception, and therefore all experience, by virtue of its primary and entire possibility. The converse, namely that knowledge of the casual law results from experience, is not the case; this was the skepticism of Hume, and is first refuted by what is here said. For the independence of the knowledge of causality from all experience, in other words, its *a priori* character, can alone be demonstrated from the dependence of all experience on it. Again, this can be done only by proving, in the manner here indicated, and explained in the passages above referred to, that the knowledge of causality is already contained in perception generally, in the domain of which all experience is to be found, and hence that it exists wholly *a priori* in respect of experience, that it does not presuppose experience, but is presupposed thereby as a condition. But this cannot be

demonstrated in the manner attempted by Kant, which I criticize in the essay *On the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (par. 23). (13)

Note how such an understanding readily leads to a privileging of the **brain as that part of the body, where the body first becomes present to itself.**

Only in the brain does our own body first present itself as an extended, articulate, organic thing. A person born blind receives this representation only gradually through data afforded him by touch. A blind man without hands would never get to know his form, or at most would infer and construct it gradually from the impression on him of other bodies.

Therefore, if we call the body immediate object, we are to be understood as implying this restriction. (20)

## 2

**Together with the object the subject is necessarily given.**

The division into object and subject ... is that form under which alone any representation of whatever kind it be, abstract or intuitive, pure or empirical, is generally possible and conceivable. Therefore no truth is more certain, more independent of all others, and less in need of proof, than this, namely that everything that exists for knowledge, and hence the whole of this world, is only object in relation to the subject, perception of the perceiver, in a word, representation. (3)

Consider in this connection Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*:

5.631 The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing.

If I wrote a book "The world as I found it." I should have therein to report on my body and say which members obey my will and which do not, etc. This then would be a method of isolating the subject or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject: that is to say, of it alone in this book mention could *not* be made

5.632 The subject does not belong to the world but is a limit of the world.

5.633 Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted?

You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight. But you do not really see the eye.

And from nothing *in the field of sight* can it be concluded that it is seen from an eye.

5.641 There is therefore really a sense in which in philosophy we can talk of a non-psychological I.

The I occurs in philosophy through the fact that "the world is my world."

The philosophical I is not the man, not the human body or the human soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject, the limit — not a part of the world.

And yet there is something about this view of things that disturbs us, as Schopenhauer makes clear at the end of the first par.

Thus in this first book we consider the world only from the abovementioned angle, only in so far as it is representation. The inner reluctance with which everyone accepts the world as his mere representation warns him that this consideration, quite apart from its truth, is nevertheless one-sided, and so is occasioned by some arbitrary abstraction. On the other hand, he can never withdraw from this acceptance. (4)

What is it that has been left out?

However the one-sidedness of this consideration will be made good in the following book through a truth that is not so immediately certain as that from which we start here. Only deeper investigation, more difficult abstraction, the separation of what is different, and the combination of what is identical can lead us to this truth. This truth, which must be very serious and grave if not terrible to everyone, is that a man can also say and must say: "The world I my will." (4)

Consider this passage from Book Two:

We want to know the significance of those representations; we ask whether this world is nothing more than representation. In that case, it would

inevitably pass by us like an empty dream, or a ghostly vision not worth our consideration. Or we ask whether it is something else, something in addition, and if so what that something is. (98-99)

One thing should have become clear: it cannot be an object. Schopenhauer **rejects the thought of an object in itself** as incoherent.

### 3

The first essential form of the world as representation is the division into subject and object. But the a priori form under which objects stand is provided by **the principle of sufficient reason**, where that principle has its foundation in something rather like the Kantian transcendental unity of the apperception, i.e. in the fact that my experience must form a coherent whole: all our representations stand in a nexus, the form of which can be determined a priori.

What is that principle? Schopenhauer addressed that question in his dissertation, where he set himself at least a twofold task:

1. to show that the tradition had been careless in its use of that principle, confusing its four quite distinct manifestations.
2. to replace the Kantian account of the a priori with a simpler one.

The traditional formulation of the principle of sufficient reason, going back to Leibniz says: *nihil est sine rationis cur potius sit quam non sit*, "nothing is without a ground accounting for why it is rather than not." In the *Monadology* Leibniz had written: "there can be found no fact that is true or existent, or any true proposition, without there being a sufficient reason for its being and not otherwise, although we cannot know the reasons in most cases" (*Monadology* 32). Consider again: *nihil est sine ratione* and compare it with a line from the mystic poet Angelus Silesius, which Heidegger liked to cite:

*Die Ros its ohn warum; sie blühet weil sie blühet.*

The rose is without a why; it blooms because it blooms.

What is Angelus Silesius trying to say? Leibniz distinguishes from the traditional a more vulgar version:

*nihil fit sine causa.*

*Causa* should be distinguished from *ratio*. The latter Leibniz explains as follows:

*ratio est in Natura, cur aliquid potius existat quam nihil.* “Reason is in nature **why** there is something rather than nothing.” In German the principle of sufficient reason is *Der Satz vom Grund*. Note the different connotation of the German *Grund* and the Latin *ratio* or the English reason. God is understood by Leibniz as the *ultima ratio*. The realm of beings is governed by the *principium rationis*. (Cf. Leibniz, *24 thèses métaphysiques*). Reason presides over all that is.

Leibniz also speaks of the *principium reddendae rationis*, the principle that an account is to be given. That is to say, we don't accept the thing simply as it presents itself, it is understood as in some sense lacking. We cannot see its ground. The use of *ratio* here suggests a collapsing of the logical and the ontological. A world governed by the principle of sufficient reason would appear to make reason the measure of reality. Compare in this connection Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*:

6.36 Laws like the law of causation (*Satz vom Grund*) treat of the network and not of what the network describes.

6.361 In the terminology of Hertz we might say: only uniform (*gesetzmässige* [better translated as “lawful”]) connections are thinkable. The principle of sufficient reason is linked to the *ratio* that wants to grasp the world. It thus appears closely linked to our attempt to master the world by knowing it. For this reason the confusion between reason and cause is not a silly one. It hides a fact that Schopenhauer appears to recognize, but does not stress very much: that “reason” would appear to be the foundation of “cause.” Expressed in more Schopenhauerian fashion: *nihil est sine ratione* provides us with the form of *nihil est sine causa*. Kant thus grounds the category of causality in the hypothetical judgment. (Compare his table of the logical functions of the understanding in judging, par. 9, *Critique of Pure Reason*, with the table of categories in 10). Schopenhauer similarly calls the hypothetical judgment the “abstract expression of the most general judgment of all we can know, i.e. of the principle of sufficient reason”: only if a, then b. Any representation b is only by virtue of another a. Representations have their ground in what they are not.

## 4.

Schopenhauer took the principle of sufficient reason to mean that all our representations depend on other representations, i.e. stand in a nexus.

But the matter is complicated by the fact that our representations are not all of one type. In his dissertation Schopenhauer had thus distinguished four classes:

1. **empirical representations**, phenomena, not just thought, but sensed: e.g. this rose. The principle of sufficient reason applied to the first class gives us the category of **causality**. Every change must have a cause.

As I have already noted, that holds also for empirical intuitions, also for the given. According to Schopenhauer the principle of causality has to be invoked already to account for the givenness of experience. The given, Schopenhauer insists, the datum is immediately referred to its cause, is understood immediately as subjective appearance, as an effect. The given demands a giver. But the giver may not be construed as the thing in itself. It must be thought as an object in space and time.

Schopenhauer also insists that there can be no first cause, no *causa sui*. *Causa sui* is understood by him as a contradiction in terms. In such cases we lose hold of the meaning of *causa*.

2. **abstract representations**, propositions, such as “this is a rose.” To this second class corresponds the **principle of sufficient reason in knowledge**. Everything we can be said to know must have its sufficient reason, although this reason may not be confused with a cause. Schopenhauer distinguishes between different kinds of truth:

a. **logical truth**, where the reason is provided by other propositions.

Logic explores this realm.

b. **empirical truth**, where the reason is provided by experience.

c. **transcendental truth**, where the reason is provided by the forms of the possibility of experience, the Kantian pure intuitions of time and space. The truths of geometry would be an example.

d. **metalogical truth**, where the reason is provided by the formal conditions of all thinking: "you cannot simultaneously attribute and deny a predicate to a subject."



In the dissertation Schopenhauer paid special attention to the widespread confusion of causes and reasons. He thought that the ontological argument rested on such a confusion. Consider once more the expression *causa sui*.

3. The third class corresponds to the content of Kant's pure intuitions of **time and space**. Schopenhauer speaks of the **ground of being**. To the third class corresponds **the dependence of every moment in time on a predecessor and a successor**, of every point in space on others. In both cases there is a series *in infinitum*. A beginning of time or a boundary of space is as unthinkable as *causa sui*.

4. The fourth class includes our actions understood as deliberate doings. To the fourth class corresponds the law of motivation. Everything we do is done for a motive. Schopenhauer speaks of motivation as **causality seen from within**. I shall bracket 3 and 4 for the time being — we shall return to them later — and concentrate on 1 and 2.

## 5

But let me return to *The World as Will and Representation*.

Anyone who has clearly seen from the introductory essay the complete identity of the content of the principle of sufficient reason, in spite of all the variety of its forms, will also be convinced of the importance of the knowledge of the simplest of its forms as such for an insight into his own inmost nature. We have recognized this simplest form to be *time*. In time each moment is, only in so far as it has effaced its father the preceding moment, to be effaced just as quickly itself. Past and future (apart from the consequences of their content) are as empty and unreal as any dream; but present is only the boundary between the two, having neither extension nor duration. In just the same way, we shall recognize the same emptiness in all the other form of the principle of sufficient reason, and shall see that, like time, space also, and like this, everything that proceeds from causes or motives, has only a relative existence, is only through and for another like itself, i.e. only just as enduring. In essence this view is old; in it Heraclitus lamented the eternal flux of things; Plato spoke with contempt of its object as that which forever becomes, but never is; Spinoza called it mere

accidents of the sole substance that alone is and endures; Kant opposed to the thing-in-itself that which is known as mere phenomenon; finally the ancient wisdom of the Indians declares that “it is Maya, the veil of deception, ...” (7 – 8)

The principle of sufficient reason is the common expression for the *a priori* forms under which objects stand. It is said to manifest itself most purely in time. According to this principle nothing independent, existing by itself can become an object for us. Every object is essentially relative, related to others. Time, space, and causality, as we have seen, are all understood as manifestations of the principle of sufficient reason, in which the *a priori* structures of Kant are gathered together.

Further, he who has recognized the principle of sufficient reason as it rules in mere, purely perceived space, has thereby exhausted the whole nature of space. For this is absolutely nothing else but the possibility of the reciprocal determination of its parts by one another, which is called *position*. The detailed consideration of this, and the formulation of the results flowing from it into abstract conceptions for convenient application, form the subject-matter of the whole of geometry. Now in just the same way, he who has recognized that form of the principle of sufficient reason which governs the content of these forms (of time and space), their perceptibility, i. e. matter, and hence the law of causality, has thereby recognized the entire essence and nature of matter as such; for matter is absolutely nothing but causality, as anyone sees immediately the moment he reflects on it. Thus its being is its acting; it is not possible to conceive for it any other being. Only as something acting does it fill space and time; its action on the immediate object (ich is itself matter) conditions the perception in which alone it exists. The consequence of the action of every material object on another is known only in so far as the latter now acts on the immediate object in a way different from that in which it acted previously; it consists in this alone. Thus cause and effect are the whole essence and nature of matter; its being is its acting. (Details of this are to be found in the essay *On the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, § 21, p. 77.) The

substance of everything material things is therefore very appropriately called in German *Wirklichkeit*, a word that is far more expressive than *Realität*. (8-9)

Causality is understood as the link between space and time. It offers the key to the being of matter:

... causality unites space and time. But we found that the whole essence of matter consists in action, and hence in causality; consequently, space and time must also be united in this, in other words, matter must carry within itself simultaneously the properties and qualities of time and those of space, however much the two are opposed to each other. It must unite within itself what is impossible in each of these two independently, the unstable flight of time with the rigid unchangeable persistence of space; from both it has infinite divisibility. (10)

We have already seen that according to Schopenhauer perception already presupposes causality. Causality thus does not impose a form on previously given perceptions. The very idea of perceptions being given presupposes a giver. This poses a problem for Kant's understanding of the thing-in-itself. Does it in some sense give the material of sensibility? But if so, is it not the cause and made into an object? If not, of just what use is it?

## 6

It should be clear that the principle of sufficient reason cannot be used to connect subject and object.

Now we must guard against the grave misunderstanding of supposing that because perception is brought about through knowledge of causality, the relation of cause and effect exists between subject and object. On the contrary, this relation always occurs only between immediate and mediate object, and hence always only between objects. On this false assumption rests the foolish controversy about the reality of the external world, a controversy in which dogmatism and scepticism oppose each other, and the former appears now as realism, now as idealism. Realism

posits the object as cause, and places its effect in the subject. The idealism of Fichte makes the object the effect of the subject. (13)

The subject is not the cause of the world of objects, nor can the world of objects generate the subject. Both attempts represent a misapplication of the principle of sufficient reason. Consider Schopenhauer's account of how a rigorous attempt to subject the subject to objects, i. e. a rigorous materialism would have to proceed:

The objective method can be developed most consistently and carried farthest when it appears as materialism proper. It regards matter, and with it time and space, as existing absolutely, and passes over the relation to the subject in which alone all this exists. Further it lays hold of the law of causality as a guiding line on which it tries to progress, taking it to be a self-existing order (or arrangement) of things, *veritas aeterna*, and consequently passing over the understanding, in which and for which alone causality is. It tries to find the first and simplest state of matter, and then to develop all the others from it, ascending from mere mechanism, to chemistry, to polarity, to the vegetable and the animal kingdoms. Supposing this were successful, the last link of the chain would be animal sensibility that is to say knowledge; which, in consequence, would then appear as a mere modification of matter produced by causality. Now if we had followed materialism thus far with clear notions, then, having reached its highest point, we should experience a sudden fit of the inextinguishable laughter of the Olympians. As though waking from a dream, we should all at once become aware that its final result, produced so laboriously, namely knowledge, was already presupposed as the indispensable condition at the very first starting-point, at mere matter. With this we imagined that we thought matter, but in fact we had thought of nothing but the subject that represents matter, the eye that sees it, the hand that feels it, the understanding that knows it. Thus the tremendous *petitio principii* disclosed itself unexpectedly, for suddenly the last link showed itself as the fixed point, the chain as a circle, and the materialist was like Baron

Münchhausen who, when swimming in water on horseback, drew his horse up by his legs, and himself by his upturned pigtail. (27)

The opposite of such a materialism is the subjectivism of a philosopher like Fichte.

Schopenhauer's remarks are characteristically caustic:

Just as though Kant had never existed, the principle of sufficient reason is for Fichte just what it was for all the scholastics, namely an *aeterna veritas*. Just as eternal fate reigned over the gods of the ancients, so over the God of the scholastics reigned those *aeternæ veritates*, in other words,, metaphysical, mathematical and metalogical truths, in the case of some even the validity of the moral law. These *veritates* alone depended on nothing, but through their necessity both God and the world existed. Therefore with Fichte, by virtue of the principle of sufficient reason as such a *veritas aeterna*, the ego is the ground of the world or of the non-ego, the object, which is just its consequent, its product. He has therefore taken good care not to examine further or to check the principle of sufficient reason. But if I am to state the form of that principle, under the guidance of which Fichte makes the non-ego result from the ego as the web from the spider, I find that it is the principle of sufficient reason of being in space. For it is only in reference to this that those tortuous deductions of the way in which the ego produces and fabricates out of itself the non-ego, forming the subject-matter of the most senseless and consequently the most tedious book ever written, acquire a kind of sense and meaning. This philosophy of Fichte, not otherwise even worth mention, is therefore of interest to us only as the real opposite of the old and original materialism, making a belated appearance. (33)

Like Kant, Schopenhauer is thus an empirical realist and a transcendental idealist. The being of representations is being for the subject, but this in no way should be understood to mean that it is therefore produced by the subject. The latter thought has led to suspicions that life may be no more than a dream.

And yet, even if the preoccupation with this problem may rest, if Schopenhauer is right, on a misapplication of the principle of sufficient reason, this misapplication is

rooted in a more serious concern, that is in the uneasiness with the weightlessness of the world of representations that I touched on earlier, uneasiness with what following Milan Kundera we might call the **unbearable lightness of its being**.

There is one important point made in these first pages of *The World as Will and Representation* on which I have not touched as yet and with it I shall begin next time: the distinction between the **intuitive** and the **abstract** which Schopenhauer states in the beginning of par. 3.

### 3. Power and Impotence of Reason

#### 1

Let me begin by reviewing some of the main points discussed last time.

1. I began by asking how Kantian is Schopenhauer's understanding of experience. In this connection I pointed to the emphasis he places on **the body**: I do not know the sun, except through the mediating eye, I do not know the earth except through the mediating hand. Schopenhauer has a **causal theory of perception**.

2. The first essential form of the world as representation is the division into subject and object: whatever is, is object for a subject. *Esse est percipi*.

3. The a priori form under which objects stand is provided by **the principle of sufficient reason**, where Schopenhauer distinguishes four quite distinct manifestations, corresponding to four classes of representations

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| a. <b>empirical representations</b> | causes   |
| b. <b>abstract representations</b>  | reasons  |
| c. <b>time and space</b>            | dependence of every moment on its predecessor and successor, of every point on other points. |
| d. <b>actions</b>                   | motives  |

#### 2

The principle of sufficient reason is the common expression for the a priori forms under which objects stand. It is said to manifest itself most purely in time. According to this principle nothing independent, existing by itself can become an object for us. Every object is essentially relative, related to others. Time, space, and causality, as we have seen, are all understood as manifestations of the principle of sufficient reason, in which the a priori structures of Kant are gathered together.

Schopenhauer sees no need to distinguish matter from force. Note the discussion of *Wirklichkeit* vs. *Realität*.

Cause and effect are the whole essence and nature of matter; its being is its acting. (9)

In his *Principles of Mechanics* Heinrich Hertz thus suggests that the force concept is dispensable in classical mechanics.

Empirical reality is understood by Schopenhauer as *Wirklichkeit*. *Wirken* means to cause, to have an effect, a *Wirkung*. Being is *energeia*. Whatever acts, acts especially on us, on our bodies. Kant's material of sensibility is understood by Schopenhauer as a first of all a bodily state, an effect. Schopenhauer speaks of the body and its states as the **immediate object**, only to point out that "object" is being used here improperly: "object" properly speaking is the product of the understanding which constitutes out of this material the objects of which we are first of all aware. **These objects are, we can say, subjective representations of the objects that are the cause of the given material. The latter are never given as such. Science aims at more objective representations of these objects.** The objects of science are essentially constructions.

### 3

Causality is understood by Schopenhauer to unite space and time:

... causality unites space and time. But we found that the whole essence of matter consists in action, and hence in causality; consequently, space and time must also be united in this, in other words, matter must carry within itself simultaneously the properties and qualities of time and those of space, however much the two are opposed to each other. It must unite within itself what is impossible in each of these two independently, the unstable flight of time with the rigid unchangeable persistence of space; from both it has infinite divisibility. (10)

We have seen that according to Schopenhauer perception already presupposes causality. And does not the very idea of perceptions as given presuppose a giver? According to Kant what gives itself to us in appearances would seem to be the thing in itself. Schopenhauer would seem to substitute for that a material object. But note that this object does not give itself to us as it is. What presents itself to us is only the subjective appearance of that object. We will never experience the object as it is. But this object should not be confused with the Kantian thing in itself. To more adequately grasp this



object is the goal of science. But of what good is then the thing-in-itself? Kant seems to suggest that it gives us the material of sensibility? But if so, is it not the cause and made into a phenomenon, an object? If not, what sense are we to make of such a giving? Of what use is the thing in itself? I shall have to return to this question.

## 4

It should be clear that as Schopenhauer understands it, **the principle of sufficient reason may not be used to connect subject and object.** The subject is not the cause of the world of objects, nor can the world of objects generate the subject. Both attempts represent a misapplication of the principle of sufficient reason. Consider once more Schopenhauer 's account of how a rigorous attempt to explain the subject in terms of matter would have to proceed:

It tries to find the first and simplest state of matter, and then to develop all the others from it, ascending from mere mechanism, to chemistry, to polarity, to the vegetable and the animal kingdoms. Supposing this were successful, the last link of the chain would be animal sensibility that is to say knowledge; which, in consequence, would then appear as a mere modification of matter produced by causality. Now if we had followed materialism thus far with clear notions, then, having reached its highest point, we should experience a sudden fit of the inextinguishable laughter of the Olympians. As though waking from a dream, we should all at once become aware that its final result, produced so laboriously, namely knowledge, was already presupposed as the indispensable condition at the very first starting-point, at mere matter. (27)

In this rejection of materialism we have an answer to the question: is Schopenhauer guilty of **psychologism**, which would have us understand thinking as a process in the world, to be investigated scientifically as any other such process, in this case by psychology?

Historically he certainly contributed to a psychologistic reading of Kant. Psychologism was prominent in the closing decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It named a supposed confusion of the logical or transcendental and the empirical. Frege and Husserl have both been said to have refuted psychologism. The charge that

Schopenhauer is guilty of this confusion can be based on statements such as the following:

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. (II, 3)

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.” (II, 8)

My world, even my own body, is here understood as a product of the brain. Consider in this connection the following argument, related to one Nietzsche gives in *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, and ask yourself what is wrong with it: consider the complicated way in which this tree over there affects our retina, enters the brain etc. Considering the dissimilarities between the final effect, the tree as we see it, the corresponding brain states, and the tree itself that is the original cause. Isn't it terribly unlikely that the tree we actually see is anything like the real tree? We can thus speak of a **physiological idealism** (which has its counterpart in what we can call a **linguistic idealism**). But such a materialism rests, as Schopenhauer shows us, on a *petitio principii*: in this case, presupposed by this challenge to our understanding of reality is that very understanding of reality. We are caught in a **circle**.

This circle finds expression in Schopenhauer's **antinomy** (p. 30): On one hand I know that the world is my representation. Without consciousness the world would have no being. Once more: *esse est percipi*. Before there was consciousness there was no

world. But that is only one consideration. Equally persuasive is the following: the emergence of consciousness is itself the effect of a long chain of causes and effects.

For, "No object without a subject," is the principle that renders all materialism for ever impossible. Suns and planets with no eye to see them and no understanding to know them can of course be spoken of in words, but for the representation, these words are a *sideroxylon*, an iron wood. On the other hand, the law of causality, and the consideration and investigation of nature which follow on it, lead us necessarily to the certain presumption that each more highly organized state of matter succeeded in time a cruder state. Thus animals existed before men, fishes before land animals, plants before fishes, and the inorganic before that which is organic; consequently, the original mass had to go through a long series of changes before the first eye could be opened. And yet the existence of this whole world remains for ever dependent on that first eye that opened, were it even that of an insect.

(29/30)

Note the anticipation of the theory of evolution in this passage.

Implicit in these remarks is what Schopenhauer calls an **antinomy of knowledge**; equally well we could speak of an **antinomy of being**, where will and representation, a transcendent and a transcendental understanding of being, point to the two sides of that antinomy.

These two contradictory points of view, to each of which we are led with equal necessity, might certainly be called an *antinomy* in our faculty of knowledge, and be set up as the counterpart of that which we found in the first extreme of natural science. On the other hand, Kant's fourfold antinomy will be shown to be a groundless piece of jugglery in the criticism of his philosophy that is appended to the present work. (30)

Schopenhauer here makes reference to an antinomy he claims to have found in natural science.

That antinomy deserves closer attention since it claims to rule out any attempt to unify the different sciences to one, even as it recognizes that to be the goal of science:

Natural science has matter as problem, and the law of causality as organon. Accordingly, its end and aim on the guiding line of causality is to refer all possible states of matter to one another and ultimately to a single state, and again to deduce these states from one another, and ultimately from one single state. (29)

That is to say: the goal of science is, to use Otto Neurath's expression, one unified science, where physics provides the key. Schopenhauer declares the prospect of achieving this goal "fairly hopeless" (29). To support that claim he can point to the range of phenomena such a unified science would have to cover:

Thus in natural science two states stand opposed as extremes: that state of matter where it is the least direct object of the subject, and the state where it is most direct object, in other words, the most dead and crude matter, the primary element, as one extreme, and the human organism as the other. Natural science as chemistry looks for the first, as physiology for the second. But as yet the two extremes have not been reached, and only between the two has something been gained. (29)

The progress science has made since forces us to revise this assessment: Today we would replace Schopenhauer's chemistry with physics, and has physics not as a matter of fact brought us much closer to closer to finally achieving the theory demanded? Consider Stephen Hawking's bestseller, *The Grand Design*. And have we not made enormous progress in understanding how our bodies function and in a way that supports rather than challenges the goal of arriving at one unified science? How can Schopenhauer then speak of an antinomy? His claim that "we see more and more clearly that what is chemical can never be referred to what is mechanical, and that what is organic to what is chemical or electrical" (29) seems to have been refuted by the progress of science. That progress seems to mock his claim that "Those who in our own day are entering anew on this old, misleading path, will soon slink back silent and ashamed, as all their predecessors have done before them" (29).

But antinomies cannot be established on empirical grounds. What then is Schopenhauer's argument.

For the law of homogeneity leads to the assumption of a first chemical state of matter which belongs only to matter as such, and which precedes all others, these being not essential to matter as such, but only accidental forms and qualities. On the other hand, it cannot be seen how this state could ever experience a chemical change, if there did not exist a second state to affect it. (29)

In the end the difficulty is that of making sense of a state that is not itself an effect. The principle of sufficient reason prevents us from making sense of a *causa sui* which is supposed to explain everything else. That the human organism, to turn to the other extreme, will not provide us with such a principle can be granted. But what lets Schopenhauer proclaim so confidently that all the different sciences are not in principle reducible to one, today we would say physics, that “Those who today once more take this old, misleading path, will soon slink back silent and ashamed, as all their predecessors have done” (29)? Consider for example this remark made very recently by Drew McDermott of Yale’s computer science department: “Nothing happens in chemistry that can’t be explained in terms of physics; nothing happens in biology that can’t be explained terms of physics and chemistry; and so forth. In the nineteenth century psychology was supposed to be an autonomous science, based on observation of thoughts and intentions as physics is based on substances and motions. In the twenty-first, we are more likely to tie it to neuroscience, and thence to biology.”<sup>3</sup> Is such confidence not justified? Even if we grant Schopenhauer that science will never be able to explain everything, is that an argument against the reducibility, in principle, of all science to physics, as the project of a unified science would seem to demand? That Schopenhauer recognizes that more needs to be said about the non-reducibility of the sciences to just one is shown by his promise of a more detailed discussion in the following book.

But we must, I think, accept his claim that an awareness of the antinomy of knowledge brings with it a recognition of **the limits set to science:**

To the assertion that knowledge is a modification of matter there is always, opposed with equal justice the contrary assertion that all matter is only

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<sup>3</sup> Drew McDermott, “How Moral Absolutism Can Be True and False at the Same Time; Or: Non-Phenomenological Existentialism,” draft 2009-06-29

modification of the subject's knowing, as the subject's representation. Yet at bottom, the aim and ideal of all natural science is a materialism wholly carried into effect. That we here recognize this as obviously impossible confirms another truth that will result from our further consideration, namely the truth that all science in the real sense, by which I understand systematic knowledge under the guidance of the principle of sufficient reason, can never reach a final goal, or give an entirely satisfactory explanation: It never aims at the inmost nature of the world; it can never get beyond the representation; on the contrary, it really tells us nothing more than the relation of one representation to another. (28)

The subject transcends the world as representation. The objectified subject, including the brain, is part of that world and is preceded by it. And yet these two cannot in the end be neatly separated, because the body is a transcendental condition of experience, and it is the same body that is an object in the world. This explains why Schopenhauer tends to link understanding and brain, material of sensibility and effects on the brain so readily. Schopenhauer to be sure also insists that we distinguish the transcendental subject from the body. But this subject is little more than what Wittgenstein calls a limit of the world, an expression of the fact that experience is of objects, if you wish an expression of the intentionality of experience. But actual experience requires **that something affect us**, and this means that some body act on another body to which our consciousness is inseparably linked, to our **body**.

## 5

There is one important point made in these first pages of *The World as Will and Representation* on which I have not touched as yet: the distinction between the **intuitive** and the **abstract**, which Schopenhauer states in the beginning of par. 3:

The main difference among our representations is that between the intuitive and the abstract. The latter constitutes only one class of representations, namely concepts; and earth these are the property of man alone. The capacity for these, which distinguishes him from all animals has at all times been called reason (*Vernunft*). (6)

The contrast is developed further by the beginning of par. 8

As from the direct light of the sun to the borrowed reflected light of the moon, so do we pass from the immediate representation of perception, which stands by itself and is its own warrant, to reflection, to the abstract, discursive concepts of the reason, which have their whole content only from that knowledge of perception, and in relation to it. As long as our attitude is one of pure perception all is clear, firm, and certain. For there are neither questions nor doubts nor errors; we do not wish to go farther, we cannot go farther; we have rest in perceiving, and satisfaction in the present moment. Perception by itself is enough; therefore what has sprung purely from it and has remained true to it, like the genuine work of art, can never be false, nor can it be refuted through any passing of time, for it gives us not opinion, but the thing itself. With abstract knowledge, with the faculty of reason, doubt and error have appeared in the theoretical, care and remorse in the practical. (35)

With reason we come to the faculty that distinguishes human beings from animals, which, on Schopenhauer's view, do have understanding. Reason is what the Greeks meant by *logos*, which however can also mean speech or discourse — we shall turn presently to what separates and unites the two. As the being that has reason the human being is the being capable of **doubt**, also the being constituted by **care**.

Schopenhauer underscores the dark side of reason:

If in the representation of perception, illusion does at moments distort reality, then in the representation of the of abstract, error can reign for thousands of years, impose its iron yoke on whole nations, stifle the noblest impulses of mankind; through its slaves and dupes it can enchain even the man it cannot deceive. It is the enemy against which the wisest minds of all times have kept up an unequal struggle, and only what these have won from it has become the property of mankind. (35)

Usually so pessimistic about humanity, Schopenhauer is confident that once truth has been victorious, there is no going back: "This is the power of truth, whose conquest is difficult and laborious; but when victory for it is once gained, it can never be wrested

away again.” (36) This would seem to imply that there is something like progress in history: the progress of truth implies a more encompassing progress.

It is only this new consciousness at a higher potential, this abstract reflex of everything intuitive in the non-perceptive conception of reason, that endows man with that thoughtfulness which so completely distinguishes his consciousness from that of the animal, and through which his whole behavior on earth turns out so differently from that of his irrational brothers. He far surpasses them in power and in suffering. They live in the present alone; he lives at the same time in the future and the past. They satisfy the need of the moment; he provides by the most ingenious preparations for the future, nay, even for times that he cannot live to see. They are given up entirely to the impression of the moment, to the effect of the motive of perception; he is determined by abstract concepts independent of the present moment. He therefore carries out considered plans, or acts in accordance with maxims, without regard to his surroundings, and to the accidental impressions of the moment. Thus, for example, he can with composure take cunning measures for his own death, dissemble to the point of inscrutableness, and take his secret with him to the grave. Finally he has an actual choice between several motives, for only *in abstracto* can such motives, simultaneously present in consciousness, afford knowledge with regard to themselves that the one excludes the other, and can thus measure against one another their power over the will (36)

Reason thus gives expression to what Heidegger calls the **ecstatic** character of Dasein. The human being is capable of so raising himself beyond himself that he need not give in to his first level desires. Only the human being faces a genuine choice. In that sense it is freedom that distinguishes human beings from animals,



Speech is the first product and the necessary instrument of his faculty of reason. Therefore in Greek and Italian speech and reason are expressed by the same word; *o λόγος, il discorso*. *Vernunft* (reason) is derived from *vermeihen*, which is not synonymous with hearing, but signifies the awareness of the meaning of thoughts communicated by words. Only by the aid of language does reason bring about its most important achievements, namely the harmonious and consistent action of several individuals, the planned cooperation of many thousands, civilization, the State; and then, science, the storing up of previous experience, the summarizing into one concept of what is common, the communication of truth, the spreading of error, thoughts and poems, dogmas and superstitions. The animal knows death only when he dies, but man consciously draws every hour nearer his death; and at times this makes life a precarious business, even to the man who has not already recognized this character of constant annihilation in the whole of life itself. Mainly on this account man has philosophies and religions, though it is doubtful whether that which we rightly esteem above all else in his conduct, namely voluntary rectitude and nobility of feeling, have ever been the fruit of them.

(37)

The human being is the being who speaks. Yet this should not be construed to mean that language and reason should be equated. Take the German "rot" and the English "red." In an obvious sense they mean the same. It is this meaning that receives different expression in these two languages that Schopenhauer calls the concept. It is these meanings that we attend to when we understand a discourse.

As object of external experience, speech is obviously nothing but a very complete telegraph communicating arbitrary signs with the greatest rapidity and the finest difference of shades of meaning. But what do these signs mean? How are they interpreted? When another person is speaking, do we at once translate his speech into pictures of the imagination that instantaneously flash upon us and are arranged, linked, formed, and colored according to the words that stream forth,

and to their grammatical inflexions ? What a tumult there would be in our heads while we listened to a speech or read a book! This is not what happens at all. The meaning of the speech is immediately grasped, accurately and clearly apprehended, without as a rule any conceptions of fancy being mixed up with it. It is reason speaking to reason that keeps within its province, and what it communicates and receives are abstract concepts, non-perceptive representations, formed once for all and relatively few in number, but nevertheless embracing, containing, and representing all the innumerable objects of the actual world. From his alone is to be explained the fact that an animal can never speak or comprehend, although it has in common with us the organs of speech, and also the representations of perception. (39/40)

Meanings are essentially abstract. But how are they abstracted. In such abstraction, Schopenhauer suggests, lies the basic achievement of thinking. Consider the difference between the seen blue and the concept blue. The experience of blue is the ground of the meaning blue. But this must mean that even on the level of perception there is a recognition of sameness, of family resemblances.

We can give this meaning another ground: imagine a blind man who learns how to use the word "blue" by listening to others. He can to some extent play the language game in which blue has its part. He can learn the "grammar" of blue. But in spite of this the meaning of blue has not been grasped.

Concepts, according to Schopenhauer, are linked to perceptions as copies are to originals. One might thus want to ascribe a picture theory of meaning to Schopenhauer, but unless "picture" is used here as a metaphor and the nature of that metaphor is kept in mind it does not do justice to his position. Concepts require an altogether different medium. Pictures are themselves sensible, concepts are not. They become sensible only through the medium of words.

Now although concepts are fundamentally different from representations of perception, they stand in a necessary relation to them, without which they would be nothing. This relation consequently constitutes their whole nature and existence. Reflection is necessarily the

copy or repetition of the originally presented world of perception, though a copy of quite a special kind in an entirely heterogeneous material.

Concepts, therefore, can quite appropriately be called representations of representations. (40)

Language and word are declared indispensable means, but they are also said to obscure the concept, a point Wittgenstein also makes in the *Tractatus*.

The medium of concepts is characterized by its **generality**.

Thus a concept has generality not because it is abstracted from several objects, but conversely, because generality, that is to say, non-determination of the particular, is essential to the concept as abstract representation of the reason; different things can be thought through the same one. (42)

As a being of thought the human being transcends his temporality.

Our whole consciousness with its inward and outward apprehension has *time* as its form throughout. On the other hand, concepts have arisen through abstraction, and are wholly universal representations which differ from all particular things. In this property they have, to a certain extent, an objective existence that yet does not belong to any time-series. Therefore, to enter the immediate present of an individual consciousness, and consequently to be capable of an insertion into a time-series, they must be to a certain extent brought down again to the nature of particular things, individualized, and thus linked to a representation of the senses; this is the *word*. Accordingly this is the sensible sign of the concept. (II, 66)

Compare this once more with Heidegger's understanding of the ecstatic nature of Dasein.

Quite in keeping with Wittgenstein's understanding of language in the *Tractatus*, Schopenhauer insists on a **tension between thinking and speech**, which in Heidegger's language would correspond to a tension between *Rede* and *Sprache*.

Word and speech, therefore, are the indispensable means to clear thinking. But just as every means, every machine, at the same time burdens and obstructs, so does language, since it forces the infinitely shaded, mobile, and modifiable idea into certain rigid, permanent forms,

and by fixing the idea it at the same time fetters it. This hindrance is partly eliminated by our learning several languages; for then the thought is cast from one form into another; and in each form it alters its shape somewhat, and thus is stripped more and more of each form and covering. In this way its own proper nature comes more distinctly into consciousness, and it again obtains its original capacity for modification. The ancient languages, however, perform this service very much better than the modern, because, on account of their great difference from these, the same idea must be expressed in them in quite a different way, and so assume a very different form. (II, 66)

In this connection we should consider the usefulness of translation exercises. Also Wittgenstein's remark in the *Philosophical Investigations* on the different ways in which we use the word "understand": sometimes we say that we have understood something when we know that we can translate it; and sometimes we say that we have understood something when we know that we cannot translate it, e.g. a poem.

#### 4. Practical Reason

1

Let me begin with a passage on p. 37, where Schopenhauer speaks once more of the achievements of language:

Only by the aid of language does reason bring about its most important achievements, namely the harmonious and consistent action of several individuals, the planned cooperation of many thousands, civilization, the State; and then, science, the storing up of previous experience, the summarizing into one concept of what is common, the communication of truth, the spreading of error, thoughts and poems, dogmas and superstitions. The animal learns to know death only when he dies, but man consciously draws every hour nearer his death; and at times this makes life a precarious business, even to the man who has not already recognized this character of constant annihilation in the whole of life itself. Mainly on this account, man has philosophies and religions, though it is doubtful whether that which we rightly esteem above all else in his conduct, namely voluntary rectitude and nobility of feeling, have ever been the fruit of them.

(37)

Reason and language allow for communication. They also open up the distinction between being and becoming; they also let the human being understand his essential being unto death, even as concepts may seem to offer a refuge from time: and yet, should we follow that invitation we would lose reality for, and Schopenhauer leaves no doubt about this, the realm of concepts is like the moon, a realm that receives whatever light it possesses from perception.

Characteristic of Schopenhauer is the way that he recognizes not only the power reason has granted us, but also its alienating power: thus reason can lead human beings to subject themselves to abstract rules, when intuition should speak. Consider in this connection his discussion of **pedantry**.

*Pedantry* also is a form of folly. It arises from a man's having little confidence in his own understanding and therefore not liking to leave

things to its discretion, to recognize directly what is right in the particular case. Accordingly, he puts his understanding entirely under the guardianship of his reason, and makes use thereof on all occasions; in other words, he wants always to start from general concepts, rules, and maxims, and to stick strictly to these in life, in art, and even in ethical good conduct. Hence that clinging to the form, the manner, the expression and the word that is peculiar to pedantry, and with it takes the place of the real essence of the matter. The incongruity between the concept and reality soon shows itself, as the former never descends to the particular case, and its universality and rigid definiteness can never accurately apply to reality's fine shades of difference and its innumerable modifications. Therefore, the pedant with his general maxims almost always comes off badly in life, and shows himself foolish, absurd, and incompetent. (60)

## 2

I pointed out already that concepts, even when in fact only a single individual falls under them, have by their very nature a range.

Thus a concept has generality not because it is abstracted from several objects, but conversely, because generality, that is to say, non-determination of the particular, is essential to the concept as abstract representation of reason; different things can be thought through the same concept

From what has been said it follows that every concept, just because it is abstract representation, not representation of perception, and therefore not a completely definite representation, has what is called a range, an extension, or a sphere, even in the case where only a single real object corresponding to it exists. We usually find that the sphere of any concept has something in common with the spheres of others, ... (42)

As the spatial metaphors "range," "extension," "sphere," suggest, this allows them to be represented by geometrical figures, especially by circles.

The presentation of these spheres by figures in space is an exceedingly happy idea. Gottfried Ploucquet, who had it first, used squares for the purpose. Lambert, after him, made use of simple lines, placed one under another. Euler first carried out the idea completely with circles. On what this exact analogy between the relations of concepts and those of figures in space ultimately rests, I am unable to say. For logic, however, it is a very fortunate circumstance that all the relations of concepts can be made plain in perception, even according to their possibility, i.e., *a priori* through such figures, in the following way:... (42)

I am a bit surprised that Schopenhauer does not give more thought to this remarkable analogy. It would seem to be supported by the analogy between seeing and knowing that ever since the Greeks has shaped philosophical thought. That analogy invites questioning.

Schopenhauer takes logic to be of only limited usefulness:

This schematism of concepts, which has been fairly well explained in several text books, can be used as the basis of the theory of judgments, as also of the whole syllogistic theory, and in this way the discussion of both becomes very easy and simple. For all the rules of this theory can be seen from it according to their origin, and can be deduced and explained. But it is not necessary to load the memory with these rules, for logic can never be of practical use, but only of theoretical interest for philosophy. For although it may be said that logic is related to rational thinking as thorough-bass is to music, and also as ethics is to virtue, or as aesthetics to art, it must be borne in mind that no one ever became an artist by the study of aesthetics, that a noble character was never formed by a study of ethics, that men composed correctly and beautifully long before Rameau, and that we do not need to be masters of thorough-bass in order to detect discords. Just as little do we need to know logic in order to avoid being deceived by false conclusions. But it must be conceded that thorough-bass is of great use in the practice of musical composition, although not for musical criticism. Aesthetics and ethics also, though in a much less degree, may have some use in practice, though a mainly negative one, and hence they

too cannot be denied all practical value; but of logic not even this much can be conceded. It is merely knowing in the abstract what everyone knows in the concrete. Therefore, we no more need to call in the aid of logical rules in order to construct a correct argument, than to do so to guard against agreeing with a false one. Even the most learned logician lays these rules altogether aside in his actual thinking. (44-45)

Logic, however, merits our interest in that it gives us insight into the essential nature of reason.

In vol. I of *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer suggests that there are four fundamental laws of thought:

1. The law of identity: the subject is equal to the sum of its predicates.
2. The law of non-contradiction: a predicate cannot be attributed and denied to the same subject at the same time.
3. The law of the excluded middle. Given two contrary predicates, one or the other must characterize every subject.
4. The principle of the sufficient reason of knowledge, which gives us a definition of truth: truth is the relation of a judgment to something outside itself, which furnishes its sufficient reason. We discussed already the different kinds of truth: empirical, transcendental, metalogical, and logical.

In vol. 2 Schopenhauer suggests that we might want to reduce the laws of thought to just two: 3 and 4.

It seems to me that the doctrine of the *laws of thought* could be simplified by our setting up only two of them, namely the law of the excluded middle, and that of sufficient reason or ground. The first law thus: “Any predicate can be either attributed to or denied of every subject.” (II, 103)

That law of thought, however, invites question. Can we, e.g., given the color spectrum, say in every case that this thing is either red or not red? That presupposes that our logic mirrors perceived reality. But just this cannot be taken for granted.

In so far as a judgment satisfies the first law of thought, it is *thinkable*; in so far as it satisfies the second, it is *true*, at any rate logically or formally



true, namely when the ground of the judgment is itself only a judgment. But material or absolute truth is ultimately always only the relation between a judgment and a perception, hence between the abstract representation and the representation of perception. (II, 103)

## 3

Schopenhauer's understanding of science anticipates certain thoughts in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*:

All *rational knowledge*, that is to say, knowledge raised to consciousness in the abstract, is related to *science* proper, as a part to the whole. Every person has obtained a rational knowledge about many different things through experience, through a consideration of the individual things presented to him; but only the person who sets himself the task of obtaining a complete knowledge in the abstract about some species of objects aspires to science. (62)

Science has its foundation in its systematic form of its representation.

This path to knowledge which it follows, namely that from the general to the particular, distinguishes it from ordinary rational knowledge. Systematic form is therefore an essential and characteristic feature of science. The combination of the most general concept-spheres of every science, in other words, the knowledge of its main principles, is the indispensable condition for mastering it. How far we want to go from these to the more special propositions is a matter of choice; it does not increase the thoroughness but the extent of learning. The number of the main principles to which all the rest are subordinated varies greatly as between the different sciences, so that in some there is more subordination, in others more coordination; and in this respect, the former make greater claims on the power of judgement, the latter on memory. (62-63)

Astronomy offered itself to Schopenhauer as an example of the former, botany as an example of the latter.

To understand a science we have to understand its form of representation, i.e. its main principles, the axioms that govern it. Consider for example these propositions in the *Tractatus*:

6.343: Mechanics is an attempt to construct according to a single plan all true propositions which we need for the description of the world.

6.341: Mechanics determines a form of description by saying: All propositions in the description of the world must be obtained in a given way from a number of given propositions, the mechanical axioms. It thus provides the bricks for the edifice of science, and says: Whatever building thou wouldst erect, thou shalt construct it in some manner with these bricks and with these alone.

The strength of science derives from the systematic form it furnishes. Mechanics has a privileged place among the sciences because of the simplicity of its form, a point that was to be developed in a manner quite close to Schopenhauer by Heinrich Hertz in his *Principles of Mechanics*. Consider the following

It may be that people often speak in a lofty tone about sciences which rest entirely upon correct conclusions drawn from sure premisses, and are therefore incontestably true. But through pure logical chains of reasoning, however true the premisses may be, we shall never obtain more than an elucidation and exposition of what already lies complete in the premisses; thus we shall only *explicitly* expound what was already *implicitly* understood therein. By these esteemed sciences are meant especially the mathematical, in particular astronomy. But the certainty of astronomy arises from the fact that it has for its basis the intuition or perception of space, given *a priori*, and hence infallible. All spatial relations, however, follow from one another with a necessity (ground of being) that affords *a priori* certainty, and they can with safety be derived from one another. To these mathematical properties is added only a single force of nature, namely gravity, acting exactly in proportion to the masses and to the square of the distance; and finally we have the law of inertia, *a priori* certain, because it follows from the law of causality, together with

the empirical datum of the motion impressed on each of these masses once for all. (66)

This is remarkably close to the approach Hertz was to follow.

Despite such passages, Schopenhauer's distrust of reason never leaves him.

#### 4

Particularly interesting in this connection is his discussion of geometry. Schopenhauer is a sort of intuitionist. Even Euclid he thinks has subordinated mathematics too much to logic. Consider the diagram shown on p. 73. We see here the truth of the Pythagorean theorem, at least for the case of a 45 - 45 - 90 triangle. No elaborate proof is needed. This is the kind of intuitive evidence that demonstrations in geometry should have according to Schopenhauer. And something analogous would seem to hold in logic, given the analogy between seeing and understanding. It would be interesting to get hold of the work of the Mr. Kosack Schopenhauer mentions, this Nordhausen teacher who carried some of Schopenhauer's ideas into practice.<sup>4</sup>

#### 5

Schopenhauer's discussion places reason in an ambiguous light: on one hand it gives us power, on the other hand it uproots us, threatens to lead us into an unreal realm of concepts and threatens to let us lose touch with our feelings and with reality. This ambiguity becomes particularly pronounced when we turn to **practical reason**. The term leads easily to confusion, for it suggests Kant and his understanding of a pure practical reason, where such reason is taken to present us with the categorical imperative.

Schopenhauer considers this one of the weakest parts of the Kantian system.

To be determined by what is perceived is the method of the animal, but is unworthy of man, who has *concepts* to guide his conduct. In this way he is emancipated from the power of the present moment existing in perception, to which the animal is unconditionally abandoned. In proportion as man

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<sup>4</sup> C. R. Kosack: "Beiträge zu einer systematischen Entwicklung der Geometrie aus der Anschauung." Nordhausen, 1852. 30 pp. Cf. *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 1964, Der Nordhauser Kosack.160) Cf. Ernst Mach, "Geometry From the Point of View of Physical Inquiry," *The Monist*, vol. 14 . no. 1, October 1903, pp. 1 – 32.

asserts this prerogative, his conduct can be called *rational*, and only in *this* sense can we speak of *practical reason*, not in the *Kantian* sense, whose inadmissibility I have discussed in detail in the essay *On the Basis of Morality*. (II, 148)

Wherever we have concepts guide our action we have an example of practical reason. This point is inseparably linked to another: by virtue of his reason the human being looks beyond the present to the future, weighs possibilities, is capable of resisting what more immediately claims him:

Thus, if inducements to pleasure and enjoyment leave it unaffected, or the threats and fury of enraged enemies do not shake it; if the entreaties of deluded friends do not cause its resolve to waver, and the deceptive forms with which preconcerted intrigues surround it leave it unmoved; if the scorn of fools and the populace does not disconcert it or perplex it as to its worth, then it seems to be under the influence of a spirit-world visible to it alone (and this is the world of concepts), before which that perceptibly present moment, open to all, dissolves like a phantom. (II, 148)

The point is stated clearly already in the first volume:

At the beginning of our consideration of reason we remarked in general terms how much the action and behaviour of man differ from those of the animal, and that this difference is to be regarded as solely the result of the presence of abstract concepts in consciousness. The influence of these on our whole existence is so decisive and significant that it places us to a certain extent in the same relation to the animals as that between animals that see and those without eyes (certain larvae, worms, and zoophytes). (84)

One more we should note the asserted analogy between rational understanding and seeing:

We, on the other hand, by virtue of knowledge in the abstract, comprehend not only the narrow and actual present, but also the whole past and future together with the wide realm of possibility. We survey life freely in all directions, far beyond what is present and actual. Thus what the eye is in

space and for sensuous knowledge, reason is, to a certain extent, in time and for inner knowledge. But just as the visibility of objects has value and meaning only by informing us of their tangibility, so the whole value of abstract knowledge is always to be found in its reference to knowledge of perception. Therefore, the ordinary natural man always attaches far more value to what is known directly and through perception than to abstract concepts, to that which is merely thought; he prefers empirical to logical knowledge. (84)

Important is the asserted dependence of reason on perception. The human being is subject to desires, often to conflicting desires. Nietzsche will speak of the human being as a battlefield of desires. These desires are objectified and mirrored in the sphere of concepts. Values on this understanding are products of reason. Not in the sense that reason simply invents values. It does so no more than it invents a concept like "blue." The ground for values lies in the feelings to which they correspond and to which they give expression. The rejection of Platonism is evident.

But Schopenhauer is more concerned to show how his position differs from that of Kant. He makes that very clear in the appendix. Consider this passage which begins by quoting Kant:

"Not merely what excites, i.e., directly affects the senses, determines man's free choice, but we have a faculty for overcoming the impressions on our sensuous appetitive faculty through representations of what is itself in a more remote way useful or hurtful. These deliberations about what is worth desiring in regard reference to our whole condition, i.e., what is good and useful, rest on reason." (Perfectly right; would that he always spoke so rationally about reason!) "Reason *therefore* (!) also gives laws, which are imperatives, i.e., objective laws of freedom, and which say what *ought* to happen, although possibly it never does happen"! Thus, without further credentials, the categorical imperative leaps into the world, in order to command there with its *unconditioned ought* — a scepter of wooden iron. For in the concept *ought* there exists absolutely and essentially consideration of threatened punishment or promised reward, as the

necessary condition, and this is not to be separated from it without abolishing the concept itself and depriving it of all meaning. Therefore an *unconditioned ought* is a *contradictio in adjecto*. (523)

I find it difficult not to agree with Schopenhauer on this point. The categorical imperative, too, must be linked to thoughts of some sort of reward if it is not to idle. Kant would indeed seem to have recognized something of the sort.

I have already mentioned Schopenhauer's other charge against Kant, that of **pedantry**. It is taken up and developed in the appendix:

Another mistake which, because it offends the feelings of everyone, is often censured, and is satirized in an epigram by Schiller, is the pedantic rule that, to be really good and meritorious, a deed must be performed simply and solely out of regard for the known law and for the concept of duty, and according to a maxim known to reason (*Vernunft*) in the abstract. It must not be performed from any inclination, any benevolence felt towards others, any tender-hearted sympathy, compassion, or emotion of the heart. (526)

Once again I find it difficult not to agree with Schopenhauer on this point.

This demand by Kant that every virtuous conduct shall be done from pure, deliberate regard for and according to the abstract maxims of the law, coldly and without inclination, in fact contrary to all inclination, is precisely the same thing as if he were to assert that every genuine work of art must result from a well-thought-out application of aesthetic rules. The one is just as absurd as the other. (527)

Of interest is the way Schopenhauer here moves from ethics to aesthetics. Again the key thought is already familiar: reason provides no content. It cannot as such be the source of imperatives. All imperatives that it furnishes are conditioned, rest on immediately experienced feelings, claims, desires. By virtue of being both, a being of perception and a being of reason, the human being lives a double life: in the world and at the same time, at a distance from himself, as a being in the world:

The universal survey of life as a whole, an advantage which man has over the animal through his faculty of reason, is also comparable to a

geometrical, colourless, abstract, reduced plan of his way of life. He is therefore related to the animal as the navigator, who by means of chart, compass, and quadrant knows accurately at any moment his course and position on the sea, is related to the uneducated crew who see only the waves and skies. It is therefore worth noticing, and indeed wonderful to see, how man, besides his life in the concrete, always lives a second life in the abstract. (85)

It is precisely this distance from life that can give us a sense that we are only dreaming, or that we are only actors in a play that we do not fully understand and of which we are not the author.

Here in the sphere of calm deliberation, what previously possessed him completely and moved him intensely appears to him cold, colourless, and, for the moment, foreign and strange; he is a mere spectator and observer. In respect of this withdrawal into reflection, he is like an actor who has played his part in one scene, and takes his place in the audience until he must appear again. In the audience he quietly looks at whatever may happen, even though it be the preparation of his own death (in the play); but then he again goes on the stage, and acts and suffers as he must. (85)

But this feeling, which can be oppressive in that it seems to rob reality of its weight, can also be used to lighten the burden of life. To the extent that I succeed in looking at life as a play that does not really concern me, the pain that this life brings ceases to really move me. — I once found myself in a hospital, in rather great pain. I found myself assuming such a spectator's point of view, clinging almost desperately to very abstract thoughts. My tastes, both in philosophy and in poetry shifted radically (to Husserl in philosophy, to Stefan George in poetry).

## 6

It is in the case of such distancing that Schopenhauer thinks we can speak of a genuinely practical reason. It finds its highest expression in the Stoic sage.

The most perfect development of *practical reason* in the true and genuine sense of the word, the highest point to which man can attain by

the mere use of his faculty of reason, and in which his difference from the animal shows itself most clearly is the ideal represented in the *Stoic sage*. For the Stoic ethics is originally and essentially not a doctrine of *virtue*, but merely a guide to a rational life, whose end and aim is happiness through peace of mind. Virtuous conduct appears in it, so to speak, only by accident, as means, not as end. Therefore the Stoic ethics is by its whole nature and point of view fundamentally different from the ethical systems that insist directly on virtue, such as the doctrines of the Vedas, of Plato, of Christianity, and of Kant. (86)

Important is the point that Stoic ethics is an ethics of happiness. Indeed all the ethical systems of antiquity, according to Schopenhauer, with the one exception of Plato's, seek the end of life in happiness, a happiness sought for in this life, not in another life, a life after death. (II, 150) In *The City of God*, St. Augustine insisted on this difference, as Schopenhauer shows with a quote in vol. II:

It is incumbent on us to explain the arguments by which men have attempted to obtain for themselves a supreme happiness *in the unhappiness of this life*, so that the great difference between what we hope for and their vain effort may become all the clearer. Philosophers have disputed much among themselves over the highest good and the greatest evil, and in treating this question with the greatest zeal, have tried to find out what makes man happy. For this is what is called the highest good. (II, 151 fn 7, *De Civitate Dei*, Bk. xix, c. 1)

Augustine here points to the misery of this life. Schopenhauer would have agreed: is the pursuit of happiness in this life not bound to fail? But given this sorry state, can we not make this miserable life most tolerable by expecting as little as possible from it? This strategy is at the heart of the ethics of Cynicism:

Accordingly, the fundamental idea of cynicism is that life in its simplest and most naked form, with the hardships that naturally belong to it, is the most tolerable, and is therefore to be chosen. For every aid, comfort, enjoyment, and pleasure by which people would make life more agreeable,



would produce only new worries and cares greater than those that originally belong to it. (II, 153)

Cynicism too, is an example of an ethics of satisfaction. It attempts to reduce the expectations and demands and thus the possibilities for disappointment.

They begged occasionally, so far as was necessary to obtain these things [the barest necessities], but they did not work. But they accepted absolutely nothing in excess of the necessities above-mentioned. Independence in the widest sense was their object. They spent their lives in resting, walking about, talking with everyone, and in scoffing, laughing and joking. Their characteristics were heedlessness and great cheerfulness. (II, 154)

Striking is how Schopenhauer in his discussion, following a long tradition, gives priority to pain over happiness.

The Stoics as Schopenhauer describes them are in many ways rather like the Cynics, only they suggest that they truly know that they do not really need the pleasures of this world and can therefore accept them. In his ability to enjoy the things of the world the Stoic thinks himself superior to the Cynic, who practices a more complete resignation. In the second volume Schopenhauer gives us a biting description of the Stoics, who are said to stand in the same relationship to the Cynics “as the well-fed Benedictines and Augustinians are to the Franciscans and Capuchins.” (II, 156)

One senses here something of a shift in Schopenhauer. In the first volume the description of Stoicism had been much more positive:

As I have understood the spirit of Stoic ethics, its source lies in the thought whether reason, man’s great prerogative, which, through planned action and its result, indirectly lightens the burdens of life so much for him, might not also be capable of withdrawing him at once and directly, i.e., through mere knowledge, either completely or nearly so, from the sorrows and miseries of every kind that fill his life. (87)

The key idea is simple enough. Limit your desires. If you ask little of life, you are less likely to be disappointed.

Note the premise on which this strategy rests: it recognizes the tension between the human desire for happiness and the miseries that are such a striking part of this life. Indeed, if Schopenhauer is right, the very idea of a truly happy life is a contradiction in terms. Happiness demands a being at one with oneself that temporality precludes. This is why Stoicism tries not to take the individual out of life, but to establish a distance between the life of reason and concrete life, so that, while continuing to live, the individual becomes his own spectator and is no longer really the one who is living. Socrates could serve as an example.

And yet the tension remains. Reason proves insufficient to effectively distance the individual from life. Again and again the world will drag even the Stoic sage back into it. Imagine such a sage with a bad toothache. Schopenhauer thus denies perfection to the Stoic life:

But, however much this end is to a certain extent attainable through the application of reason and through a merely rational ethic, and although experience shows that the happiest are indeed those purely rational characters commonly called practical philosophers — and rightly so, because just as the real, i.e. theoretical philosopher translates life into the concept, so they translate the concept into life — nevertheless we are still very far from being able to arrive at something perfect in this way, from being actually removed from all the burdens and sorrows of life, and led to the blissful state by the correct use of our reason. On the contrary we find a complete contradiction in our wishing to live without suffering, a contradiction that is therefore implied by the frequently used phrase, "blessed life."(90))

## 7

The ending of this paragraph, which is also the ending of the first book is particularly interesting. Somehow, Schopenhauer suggests, the Stoic ideal, admirable as it no doubt is in many ways, rings false to us. It does not seem to do justice to human being. Something has been left out. That something has indeed been left out announces itself first of all in the Stoic's suggestion that suicide is rather like medicine. In Plato

already we find this suggestion that life is a disease for which death is the cure. Thus Socrates, having been condemned to death, asks his friend *Crito* to pay the debt he owes to the god of healing, Asclepius. But like Schopenhauer, Plato refuses to accept suicide as a solution to the problem of life. But why, if the human being is better off dead than alive, should he not take his own life? Is that not then the rational thing to do? Socrates' answer in the *Phaedo* is more a suggestion than a reasoned argument:

There is a doctrine whispered in secret that man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door and turn away; this is a great mystery which I do not quite understand. Yet I believe that the gods are our guardians, and that we men are a possession of theirs. Do you not agree? ... a man should wait and not take his own life until God summons him, as he is now summoning me.

What the Stoic would reject in this view is that the human being belongs to a higher reality. Schopenhauer agrees with Plato in rejecting suicide as a solution to the problem of life, but he does not agree with his reasoning.

Here a marked contrast is evident between the Stoic ethics and all those other systems mentioned above. These ethical systems make virtue directly and in itself the aim and object, even with the most grievous sufferings, and will not allow a man to end his life in order to escape from suffering. But not one of them knew how to express the true reason for rejecting suicide, but they laboriously collected fictitious arguments of every kind." (91)

But why not suicide? We shall have to return to this point.

The concluding sentences of Book One offer no more than a pointer:

But the above-mentioned inner contradiction, with which the Stoic ethics is affected even in its fundamental idea, further shows itself in the fact that its ideal, the Stoic sage as represented by this ethical system, could never obtain life or inner poetical truth, but remains a wooden, stiff lay-figure with whom one can do nothing. He himself does not know where to go with his wisdom, and his perfect peace, contentment, and blessedness directly contradict the nature of mankind, and do not enable us to arrive at

any perceptive representation thereof. Compared with him, how entirely different appear the overcomers of the world and voluntary penitents, who are revealed to us, and are actually produced, by the wisdom of India; how different even the Savior of Christianity, that excellent form full of the depth life, of the greatest poetical truth and highest significance, who stands before us with perfect virtue, holiness, and sublimity, yet in a state of supreme suffering (91)

Virtue and suffering are linked in the moving image of Christ. That we are so moved suggests that something is wrong with the ethics of happiness in this life. This ending is but a promissory note, pointing ahead to the fourth book, where these issues will be raised once again. But note also how this criticism answers to the suggestion made in the very beginning of the first book, that in its entirety it rests on an abstraction that cannot do full justice to human reality and experience. That suggestion is now reinforced.

## 5. The Turn to the Body

### 1

Two points made in Book One prepare for the transition to Book Two:

1. In the first paragraph Schopenhauer spoke of the inner reluctance with which we accept the view of the world as mere representation. Something seems to be missing. That view seems to be based on some arbitrary, one-sided abstraction. This point is later echoed in the claim that the Stoic sage, as Schopenhauer has sketched him for us, lacks life or inner poetical truth. Implicit in these observations is the outline of an argument that leads us beyond the world as representation. Let me attempt to sketch it.

1. The world speaks to us; it claims us, fills us with desires and aversions.

2. If the world were mere representation it could not do so. If the human being were no more than the knowing subject, mere spectator, then these representations could not move us. Life would be a dream.

3. But presupposed by this judgment, "life is a dream," is already a comparison to waking reality. There must be more to the world than representation. And we must have some access to this more, otherwise we could never judge the world to be a dream.

As I have just stated this argument, it is not peculiar to Schopenhauer. I could point to Descartes. In a movement of reflection Descartes detaches himself from experience, transforms this experience into the encounter of a pure subject with objects. But something is lost in this reduction: the world threatens to become empty, dreamlike. The proof of the existence of God is finally needed to restore what has been lost. And here it is important to note that in this proof the notion of degrees of reality, of perfection plays an important part. The world of the dream is a valueless world, a world in which everything counts the same, is *gleichgültig*, i. e., a matter of indifference.

Similarly Kant in the *First Critique* reduces the world in which we live, love, and suffer to a world of representations. Access to things in themselves is gained only through practical reason, only through freedom. As I experience myself or other persons as persons I escape from the world of representations.

## 2

The basic argument is stated beautifully by Fichte in *The Vocation of Man*. Descartes' demon reappears here in the guise of the transcendental philosopher. He teaches Fichte's "I" the lesson that the world is his representation. Fichte's "I" answers:

Call your thoughts by what name thou wilt; by all that you have hitherto said, there is nothing, absolutely nothing but presentations, — modes of consciousness, and of consciousness only. But a presentation is to me only the picture, the shadow, of a reality; in itself it cannot satisfy me, and has not the smallest worth. I might be content that this material world beyond me should vanish into a mere picture, or be dissolved into a shadow; I am not dependent on it. But according to your previous reasoning, I myself disappear no less than it; I myself am transformed into a mere presentation, without meaning and without purpose. Or tell me, is it otherwise? (76)<sup>5</sup>

Fichte's spirit here convinces the I of the truth of transcendental idealism: to be is to be a presentation of consciousness. But such presentations cannot claim me. They leave me with a sense of the unbearable lightness of being. That is essentially the position in which Schopenhauer leaves us at the end of Book One. But the I refuses to settle for transcendental idealism. Reality may not be equated with knowledge. Reality transcends knowledge.

The reality, in which you formerly believed — a material world existing independently of you, of which you feared to become the slave, — has vanished; for this whole material world arises only through knowledge, and is itself our knowledge. But knowledge is not reality — just because it is knowledge. You have seen through the illusion; and without belying your better insight, you can never again give yourself up to it. This is the sole merit which I claim for the system which we have together discovered; it destroys and annihilates error. It cannot give us truth, for in itself it is absolutely empty. You now seek, and with good right as I well know,

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<sup>5</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, ed. and intro. Roderick M., Chisholm, (New York, Liberal Arts Press, 1956)

something real lying beyond mere appearance, another reality than that which has thus been annihilated. But in vain would you labor to create this reality by means of your knowledge, or out of thy knowledge; or to embrace it by your understanding. If you have no other organ by which to apprehend it, you will never find it. (82)

We should ask ourselves: just how is truth to be understood here? Presumably as a correspondence of knowledge to reality. But just such a correspondence knowledge cannot establish. To do so, it would have to get outside itself. In this sense the truth is denied to knowledge. Kant might want to say: we have no knowledge of things-in-themselves. On the level of detached knowing there is no escape from the Cartesian dreams.

So what strategy is left to Fichte's I?

Terrible Spirit, your discourse has smitten me to the ground. But you have referred me to myself. And what would I be if anything external to me could irrecoverably cast me down? I will, — yes, I will surely follow your counsel.

What do you seek, then, my complaining heart? What is it that causes you to rebel against a system to which my understanding cannot raise the slightest objection?

This it is: I demand something beyond a mere presentation or conception; something that is, has been, and will be, even if the presentation were not; and which the presentation only records, without producing it, or in the smallest degree changing it. (83)

If life is to have a meaning reality must transcend knowledge. We cannot leave a cognitive transcendental idealism the last word.

A mere presentation I now see to be a deceptive show; my presentations must have a meaning beneath them, and if all my knowledge revealed to me nothing but knowledge, I would be defrauded of my whole life. That there is nothing whatever but my presentations or conceptions, is, to the natural sense of mankind, a silly and ridiculous conceit which no man can seriously entertain and which requires no refutation. (83)

But what sort of faith is this that refuses to settle for what has here been called knowledge. And does this faith furnish us with what deserves to be called a higher knowledge?

And what, then, is this something lying beyond all presentation, toward which I stretch forward with such ardent longing? What is the power with which it draws me towards it? What is the central point in my soul with which it is so intimately bound up and with which alone it can be destroyed? (83)

We should note that the search for something “without,” lying beyond all presentation, leads Fichte’s I to look within.

“Your vocation is not merely *to know*, but *to act* according to your knowledge ”; this is loudly proclaimed in the innermost depths of my soul, as soon as I recollect myself for a moment, and turn my observation inward upon my self. “You are here, not for idle contemplation of yourself, or for brooding over devout sensations; — no, you are here for action; your action, and your action alone, determines your worth.” (83-84)

Why do we recognize the dream into which transcendental idealism would transform our experience as a dream? Because we compare the pale reality that remains after the theoretical reduction with the richer sense of experience of our being in the world that preceded it and that is inseparable from our self-understanding as actors. It can be recovered only by giving up the primacy of the theoretical and by turning to the practical. To the knower we must oppose the actor. Only the actor seizes reality. Consider in this connection Heidegger's turn from third person to first person experience, from presence-at-hand to readiness-to-hand.

But let me turn now to Schopenhauer.

### 3

In the first book we considered the representation only as such, and hence only according to the general form.... It will be of special interest for us to obtain information about its real significance, that significance, otherwise



merely felt, by virtue of which these pictures or images do not march past us strange and meaningless, as they would otherwise inevitably do, but speak to us directly, are understood, and acquire an interest that engrosses our whole nature. (95)

What gives things their significance? Take a hunger that leaves no doubt about the significance of a piece of bread. But how are we to understand that "real significance"?

Schopenhauer introduces his discussion of this question with a consideration of mathematics, natural science and philosophy and of what they might have to contribute. **Philosophy** is quickly dismissed. It has moved within an understanding of being as objective being, thus has proven itself unable to give an adequate account of what transcends objectivity. That **mathematics**, founded as it is in the form of representation, will not give us the thing in itself we are looking for requires no comment. That leaves **natural science** where Schopenhauer distinguishes between **morphology** and **etiology**.

Finally, if we look at the wide province of natural science, which is divided into many fields, we can first of all distinguish two main divisions. It is either the description of forms and shapes, which I call *Morphology*; or an explanation of changes, which I call *Etiology*. The former considers the permanent forms, the latter the changing matter, according to the laws of its transition from one form into another. (96)

Morphology is content to catalogue, where "an unmistakable family likeness" (97) provides principles for ordering. Wittgenstein was to return to this crucial concept, which provides a key to concept formation. But the ground of such likeness remains mysterious. Why should monkeys and human beings share so many characteristics?

Etiology, of which the theory of evolution would be a representative, attempts to answer such questions. But its explanations too leave us with something that remains obscure and opaque.

But in this way we do not obtain the slightest information about the inner nature of any one of these phenomena. This is called a *natural force*, and it lies outside the province of etiological explanation, which calls the unalterable constancy with which the manifestation of such a force appears whenever its known conditions are present, a *law of nature*. But

this law of nature, these conditions, this appearance in a definite place at a definite time, are all that it knows, or ever can know. The force itself that is manifested, the inner nature of the phenomena that appear in accordance with those laws, remain for it an eternal secret, something entirely strange and unknown, in the case of the simplest as well as of the most complicated phenomena. For although etiology has so far achieved its aim most completely in mechanics, and least so in physiology, the force by virtue of which a stone falls to the ground, or one body repels another, is, in its inner nature, just as strange and mysterious as that which produces the movements and the growth of an animal. (97)

Note that the inner nature of things is said here to show itself as a natural force. This force articulated in some supposed law of nature, is presupposed by etiological explanation, but not itself explained. Take the story of Newton and the falling apple. Newton recognizes a family resemblance in widely different phenomena. He responds to that analogy by formulating his laws of motion. But these laws, though the presupposition of explanations, remain unexplained. The world presents itself to science as in principle unfathomable. In this experience of the limits set to explanation, the thing in itself announces itself.

The point is made perhaps more clearly in vol. II

On the other hand, I cannot assume that even these lifeless bodies exist simply and solely in my representation, but as they have unfathomable properties, and, by virtue of these, activity, I must concede them a being-in-itself of some kind. But this very inscrutability of the properties, pointing as it certainly does on the one hand to something existing independently of our knowledge, on the other hand gives the empirical proof that, because our knowledge consists only in the *framing of representations* by means of subjective forms, such knowledge always furnishes mere *phenomena*, not the being-in-itself of things. From this it can be explained that in all we know, a certain something remains hidden from us as quite unfathomable, and we must confess that we are unable to understand even the commonest and simplest phenomena. (II, 194)

We can thus provide something like an empirical proof that the being-in-itself of things transcends our comprehension. But what this being-in-itself is we cannot know.

Never can the nature of anything pass over into knowledge wholly and without reserve; but still less can anything real be constructed *a priori*, like something mathematical. Therefore the empirical inscrutability of all the beings of nature is an *a posteriori* proof of the ideality, and merely phenomenal actuality, of their empirical existence. (II, 195)

Every thing presents itself to us as both phenomenon and as thing in itself. This double awareness of being is inseparable from our understanding of the reality of things, their givenness. But all this gives us no insight into the thing in itself.

A radically different approach is necessary if there is to be further progress.

So far I agree with Kant. But now, as the counterpoise to this truth, I have stressed that other truth that we are not merely the *knowing subject*, but that we ourselves are also among those realities or entities we require to know, that *we ourselves are the thing-in-itself*. Consequently, a way *from within* stands open to us to that real inner nature of things to which we cannot penetrate *from without*. It is, so to speak, a subterranean passage, a secret alliance, which, as if by treachery, places us all at once in the fortress that could not be taken by attack from without. Precisely as such the *thing-in-itself* can come into consciousness only quite directly, namely by *it itself being conscious of itself*; to try to know it objectively is to desire something contradictory. Everything objective is representation, consequently appearance, in fact mere phenomenon of the brain. (II. 195)

Objectively considered all our experience has to be considered a phenomenon of the brain. That invites, as I suggested, a psychological or physiological understanding of the Kantian cognitive functions. In this sense Schopenhauer may be said to have prepared the way for psychologism, together with Jakob Fries.

#### 4

But let me continue with the main thread of the discussion

In fact, the meaning that I am looking for of the world that stands before

me simply as my representation, or the transition from it as mere representation of the knowing subject to whatever it may be besides this, could never be found if the investigator himself were nothing more than the purely knowing subject (a winged cherub without a body). But he himself is rooted in that world; and thus he finds himself in it as an *individual*, in other words, his knowledge, which is the conditional supporter of the whole world as representation, is nevertheless given entirely through the medium of a body, and the affections of this body are, as we have shown, the starting-point for the understanding in its perception of this world. (99)

We are not pure knowers. We are individuals located in the world by our bodies, acted on by the things of that world. The word *Wirklichkeit* gives expression to this. If being were no more than being for a subject, "Wirklichkeit" would ill name it.

To the subject of knowing, who appears as an individual only through his identity with the body, this body is given in two entirely different ways. It is given in intelligent perception as a representation, as an object among objects, liable to the laws of these objects. But it is also given in quite a different way, namely as what is known immediately to every one, and is denoted by the word *will*. Every true act of his will is also at once and inevitably a movement of the body. The act of will and the action of the body are not two different states objectively known, connected by the bond of causality; they do not stand in the relation of cause and effect, but are one and the same thing, though given in two entirely different ways, first quite directly, and then in perception for the understanding. (100)

This account of the double awareness of the body recalls Spinoza. Action or practice are tied by Schopenhauer to the will and the will to the body

The crucial transition is made in par. 19. Here Schopenhauer makes explicit what he considers the double awareness that we have of our body. Recognizing ourselves as will we recognize ourselves as transcending ourselves as mere representations.

Whereas in the first book we were reluctantly forced to declare our own body to be mere representation of the knowing subject, like all the

other objects of this world of perception, it has now become clear to us that something in the consciousness of everyone distinguishes the representation of his own body from all others that are in other respects quite like it. This is that the body occurs in consciousness in quite another way, *toto genere* different that is denoted by the word *will*. It is just this double knowledge of our own body which gives us information about that body itself, about its action and movement following on motives, as well about its suffering through outside impressions, in a word, about what it is, not as representation, but as something over and above this; and hence what it is *in itself*. We do not have such immediate information about the nature, action, and suffering of any other real objects. (103)

But is my body perhaps the only reality? Is there still room for the solipsistic position? Schopenhauer's answer is interesting. His suggestion that solipsism requires not so much a refutation as a cure reminds one of Wittgenstein.

Theoretical egoism, of course, can never be refuted by proofs, yet in philosophy it has never been positively used otherwise than as a sceptical sophism, i.e., for the sake of appearance. As a serious conviction, on the other hand, it could be found only in a madhouse; and as such it stands in need not so much of a refutation as a cure. Therefore we do not go into it any further, but regard it as the last stronghold of scepticism, which is always polemical. (104)

The reality of other things is understood in the image of this self-understanding. To ascribe reality to them is to recognize that they are more than our representations.

The double knowledge which we have of the nature and action of our own body, and which is given in two completely different ways, has now been clearly brought out. Accordingly, we shall use it further as a key to the inner being of every phenomenon in nature. We shall judge all objects which are not our own body, and therefore are given to our consciousness not in the double way, but only as representations, according to the analogy of this body, and are in this respect homogeneous with it, so, on the other hand, if we set aside their existence as the

subject's representations, what still remains over must be, according to its inner nature, the same as what in ourselves we call *will*. For what other kind of existence or reality could we attribute to the rest of the material world? From what source could we take the elements out of which we construct such a world? Besides the will and the representation, there is absolutely nothing known or conceivable to us. (104-105)

The question remain, however, why does Schopenhauer choose the word "will" to name this transcendent being? I shall return to this question next time.

## 6. Thing-in-itself as Will

### 1

Last time I suggested that two points made in the first book prepare for the transition to Book Two: In the first paragraph Schopenhauer spoke of the inner reluctance with which we accept the view of the world as mere representation. That view seems to be based on some arbitrary, one-sided abstraction. At the end of the first book this point is echoed by the claim that the image of the Stoic sage, who relies on reason to lead as happy a life as possible, lacks life or inner poetical truth.

I then went on to sketch the outline of an argument that leads us beyond the world of representation. I suggested that in its most basic form this argument it is not peculiar to Schopenhauer. To show this I spent a bit of time on Fichte's *The Vocation of Man*. On the level of detached knowing there is no escape from the Cartesian dream. But why do we recognize the dream as a dream? Because we compare the pale reality that remains after the theoretical reduction, with the richer sense of experience of our being in the world that preceded it. It can be recovered only by giving up the primacy of the theoretical and by turning to the practical.

### 2

Schopenhauer makes this point at the beginning of par. 18 — and I am returning to our discussion of last week:

In fact, the meaning that I am looking for of the world that stands before me simply as my representation, or the transition from it as mere representation of the knowing subject to whatever it may be besides this, could never be found if the investigator himself were nothing more than the purely knowing subject (a winged cherub without a body). But he himself is rooted in that world; and thus he finds himself in it as an *individual*, in other words, his knowledge, which is the conditional supporter of the whole world as representation, is nevertheless given entirely through the medium of a body, and the affections of this body are, as we have shown, the starting-point for the understanding in its

perception of this world. (99)

We are not pure knowers. We are individuals located in the world by our bodies, acted on by that world. As pointed out, the word *Wirklichkeit* gives expression to this. If being were no more than being for a subject, "*Wirklichkeit*" would ill name it.

The crucial transition is made in par. 19. Here Schopenhauer makes explicit what he considers **the double awareness that we have of our body**. As **will** we recognize ourselves as transcending ourselves as mere representations. Let me read once more a key passage:

Whereas in the first book we were reluctantly forced to declare our own body to be mere representation of the knowing subject, like all the other objects of this world of perception, it has now become clear to us that something in the consciousness of everyone distinguishes the representation of his own body from all others that are in other respects quite like it. This is that the body occurs in consciousness in quite another way, *toto genere* different, that is denoted by the word *will*. It is just this double knowledge of our own body which gives us information about that body itself, about its action and movement following on motives, as well about its suffering through outside impressions, in a word, about what it is, not as representation, but as something over and above this; and hence what it is *in itself*. We do not have such immediate information about the nature, action, and suffering of any other real objects. (103)

Schopenhauer is not saying that I have an adequate understanding of the will as it is in itself even in my own case. The knowledge I have of myself is inevitably mediated. When I understand myself as willing, such understanding is inevitably tied to representations. I know myself as willing only in particular acts. In this sense Schopenhauer will say that **the individual will is a phenomenon of the will**, but a phenomenon apparently different from a phenomenon like a tree in that I in a sense inhabit that phenomenon; I am that phenomenon. I am my body. Still, the human will,



too, is inevitably **phenomenon, subject to the principle of sufficient reason, i.e. to motives.**

Now, if this thing-in-itself (we will retain the Kantian expression as a standing formula) — which, as such, is never object, since all object is its mere appearance or phenomenon, and not it itself — is to be thought of objectively, then we must borrow its name and concept from an object, from something in some way objectively given, and therefore from one of its own manifestations. But in order to serve as a point of explanation, this can be none other than the most complete of all its phenomena, i.e., the most distinct, the most developed, the most directly enlightened by knowledge; but this is precisely man's will. (110)

This ambiguous phenomenon provides Schopenhauer with the entrance to the thing in itself. It is obvious that the word "will" here is only a **metaphor**, a precarious bridge over an abyss (the abyss that in *The Birth of Tragedy* divides the Apollonian from the Dionysian). We have no choice but to turn to an object to name the thing in itself. There is thus an inevitable violence to such naming. Consider the nature of the will:

The will as thing in itself is quite different from its phenomenon, and is entirely free from all the forms of the phenomenon into which it first passes when it appears, and which therefore concern only its *objectivity*, and are foreign to the will itself. Even the most universal form of all representation, that of object for subject, does not concern it, still less the forms which are subordinate to this and collectively have their common expression in the principle of sufficient reason. As we know, time and space belong to this principle, and consequently plurality as well, which exists and has become possible only through them. In this last regard I shall call time and space the *principium individuationis*, an expression borrowed from the old scholasticism, and I beg the reader to bear this in mind once and for all. For it is only by means of time and space that something which is one and the same according to its nature and the concept appears as different, as a plurality of coexistent and successive things. Consequently time and space are the *principium*

*individuationis*, the subject of so many subtleties and disputes among the scholastics which are found collected in Suarez (Disp. 5, Sect. 3). It is apparent from what has been said, that the will as a thing-in-itself lies outside the province of the principle of sufficient reason in all its forms, and is consequently completely groundless, although each of its phenomena are entirely subject to that principle. (112)

The will is an abyss, the abyss that supports the world as representation. Schopenhauer thus calls the will groundless.

The groundlessness of will has actually been recognized where it manifests itself most distinctly, that is, as the will of man; and this has been called free and independent. But as to the groundlessness of the will itself, the necessity to which its manifestation is everywhere liable, has been overlooked, and actions have been declared to be free, which they are not. For every individual action follows with strict necessity from the effect of the motive on the character. As we have already said, all necessity is the relation of the consequent to the ground, and nothing more. (113)

Schopenhauer is a determinist and takes determinism to be compatible with our sense of freedom. Crucial here is the introduction of the notion of character, where Schopenhauer's debt to Kant is evident.

But because in self-consciousness the will is known directly and in itself, there also lies in this consciousness the consciousness of freedom. But the fact is overlooked that the individual, the person, is not will as thing-in-itself, but is *phenomenon* of will, is as such determined, and has entered the form of the phenomenon, the principle of sufficient reason. Hence we get the strange fact that every one consider himself to be *a priori* quite free, even in his individual actions, and imagines he can at any moment enter upon a different way of life, which is equivalent to saying that he can become a different person. But *a posteriori* through experience, he finds to his astonishment that he is not free, but liable to necessity; that notwithstanding all his resolutions and reflections he does not change his

conduct, and that from the beginning to the end of his life he must bear the same character that he himself condemns, and, as it were, must play to the end the part he has taken upon himself. I cannot pursue this discussion any further here, for, being ethical, it belongs to another part of this work. Meanwhile, I wish to point out here only that the *phenomenon* of the will, in itself groundless, is yet subject as such to the law of necessity, that is to say, to the principle of sufficient reason, so that in the necessity with which the phenomena of nature ensue, we may not find anything to prevent us from recognizing in them the manifestations of the will.  
(113/114)

One has to wonder at this point, whether Schopenhauer has really penetrated beyond phenomena to the thing-in-itself, even in his own case. He answers this question by pointing to the strangest of all phenomena, to human **freedom**. In turning to the experience of freedom to gain access to the thing-in-itself Schopenhauer is again quite close to Kant. Perhaps also to Descartes — consider in this connection what Descartes has to say about freedom in the 4<sup>th</sup> Meditation.

### 3

Let me return to the question: why does Schopenhauer choose the word "will" to name this transcendent being? As we have already seen, in the case of the human being phenomenon and thing in itself are inextricably entangled.

This is the knowledge that the inner nature of his own phenomenon, which manifests itself to him as representation both through his actions and through the permanent substratum of these, his body, is his will. (109)

Within us we discover the abyss of the thing-in-itself, which is the will.

This will constitutes what is most immediate in his consciousness, but as such it has not wholly entered into the form of the representation, in which object and subject stand over against each other; on the contrary, it makes itself known in an immediate way in which subject and object are not quite clearly distinguished, yet it becomes known to the individual himself not as a whole, but only in its particular acts. (109)

But that discovery is inseparably bound up with our awareness of our individual will. This offers Schopenhauer the metaphor that he takes to do greatest justice to the being of the thing-in-itself.

I therefore name the genus after its most important species, the direct knowledge of which lies nearest to us, and leads to the indirect knowledge of all the others. But anyone who is incapable of carrying out the required extension of the concept will remain involved in a permanent misunderstanding. For by the word *will*, he will always understand only that species of it hitherto exclusively described by the term, that is to say, the will guided by knowledge, strictly according to motives, indeed only to abstract motives, thus manifesting itself under the guidance of the faculty of reason. This, as we have said, is only the most distinct phenomenon or appearance of the will. We must now clearly separate out in our thoughts the innermost essence of this phenomenon, known to us directly, and then transfer it to all the weaker, less distinct phenomena of the same essence, and by so doing achieve the desired extension of the concept of will. (111)

When we call the reality of all things “will” we are calling the genus by its most familiar species. The term is thus a metaphor, more precisely a synecdoche —here a term appropriate to a particular species is extended to the genus. This presupposes that we in some sense recognize a family resemblance in all things. The things must strike us in some sense as if they were variations on some unknown theme.

But we see at once from the instinct and the mechanical skill of animals that the will is also active where it is not guided by any knowledge. That they have representations and knowledge is of no account at all here, for the end towards which they work as definitely as if it were a known motive remains entirely unknown to them. Therefore, their action here takes place without motive, is not guided by the representation, and shows us first and most distinctly how the will is active even without any knowledge. The one-year old bird has no notion of the eggs for which it builds a nest, the young spider has no idea of the prey for which it spins a

web; the ant-lion has no notion of the ant for which it digs a cavity for the first time. The larva of the stag-beetle gnaws the hole in the wood, where it will undergo its metamorphosis, twice as large if it is to become a male beetle as if it is to become a female, in order in the former case to have room for the horns, though, as yet it has no idea of these. (114)

According to Schopenhauer the behavior of these animals does betray some sort of knowledge, but it is not guided by it. It is in this sense blind activity, although nevertheless purposive, so that in describing such activity we invoke final causes. Something manifests itself here that does seem to justify the invocation of the metaphor “will.”

In this connection Schopenhauer introduces a threefold distinction between different types of causes, cause proper, stimulus, and motive (115). In moving downward from animal to plant we descend from motive to stimulus.

All the movements of plants follow upon stimuli, for the absence of knowledge and the movement following upon motives conditioned by such knowledge constitutes the only essential difference between animal and plant. Therefore, what appears for the representation as plant, as mere vegetation, as blindly urging force, will be taken by us, according to its inner nature, to be will, and it will be recognized by us as that very thing which constitutes the basis of our own phenomenon, as it expresses itself in our actions, and also in the whole existence of our body itself. (117)

A further step extending the metaphor is taken when we turn to the inorganic:

Now let us consider attentively and observe the powerful irresistible impulse with which masses of water rush downwards, the persistence and determination with which the magnet always turns to the North Pole, the keen desire with which iron flies to the magnet, the vehemence with which the poles of the electric current strive for reunion, and which, like the vehemence of human desire, is increased by obstacles. Let us look at the crystal being rapidly and suddenly formed with such regularity of configuration; it is obvious that this is only a perfectly definite and precisely determined striving in different directions

constrained and held firm by coagulation. Let us observe the choice with which bodies repel and attract one another, unite and separate, when set free in the fluid state and released from the bonds of rigidity. Finally, we feel directly and immediately how a burden, which hampers our body by its gravitation towards the earth, incessantly presses and squeezes this body in pursuit of its one tendency. If we observe all this, it will not cost us great effort of the imagination to recognize once more our own inner nature even at so great a distance. It is that which in us pursues its ends by the light of knowledge, but here, in the feeblest of its phenomena, only strives blindly in a dull, one-sided and unalterable manner. (117-118)

Of interest is the introduction of **character** at this point. The way human beings respond to motives always presupposes a particular character.

For in man individuality stands out powerfully; everyone has a character of his own, and hence the same motive does not have the same influence on all, and a thousand minor circumstances, finding scope in one individual's wide sphere of the knowledge but remaining unknown to others, modify its effect. For this reason an action cannot be predetermined from the motive alone, since the other factor namely an exact acquaintance with the individual character, and with the knowledge accompanying that character, is wanting. (118)

Since the individual's particular character is not transparent even to the acting individual, such an individual will be unable to predict what a particular decision will be. And that we have this particular character rather than another is groundless. And so our choices are in this sense finally groundless. That, according to Schopenhauer, explains our sense of freedom. It is precisely one's character that makes something a particular motive. The antecedents of this discussion of character are found in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, see especially the solution to the third antinomy, A 538ff. See also Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 563, "Existential Psychoanalysis."

With the notion of character Schopenhauer introduces what he terms a *qualitas occulta*, a mysterious, i.e. groundless quality that is not finally to be explained away by reducing it to other causes. Character, on Schopenhauer's view, presents itself as a

mysterious given that lets a particular individual act in a particular fashion, just as gravity lets inorganic matter behave in a certain way. We shall return to this notion of character in the fourth book.

Implicit in Schopenhauer's observations is a critique of attempts to reduce everything to mechanical causes and all explanation to causal explanation so understood. According to Schopenhauer Aristotle was quite right to insist on teleological explanations, especially when dealing with the organic sphere. Final causes, he tells us, are the clue to understanding organic nature, just as efficient causes give us the key to the understanding of inorganic nature. The reduction of all teleological to efficient causation would, if Schopenhauer is right, do violence to the phenomena we are trying to understand. Here, too, he follows Kant — see the *Critique of Judgment*. I take this to be an empirical claim, a claim to be tested.

According to Schopenhauer a fear of theology has often stood in the way of an acceptance of teleological explanation. But he professes to see no necessary connection between teleology and theology. His own and Aristotle's philosophy are offered as evidence.

Schopenhauer, once more agreeing with Kant, would grant, however, that we have a natural tendency to explain every phenomenon mechanically, because here we get by with a minimum of occult qualities, and much of such explanation rests on what is given to us *a priori*.

Of course at all times an etiology, unmindful of its aim, has striven to reduce all organized life to chemistry or electricity, all chemistry, i.e. quality, in turn to mechanism (effect through the shape of the atoms), and this again sometimes to the object of phronomy, i.e. time and space, united for the possibility of motion, sometimes to the object of mere geometry, i.e., position in space (much in the same way as we rightly work out in a purely geometrical way the diminution of an effect according to the square of the distance and the theory of the lever). Finally, geometry can be resolved into arithmetic, which by reason of its unity of dimension is the most intelligible, comprehensible, and completely fathomable form of the principle of sufficient reason. (122)

The reduction of everything to arithmetic would mean that we had succeeded in rendering everything transparent. But at this point, Schopenhauer insists, we would have lost reality:

Suppose this were feasible, then of course everything would be explained and cleared up, and in fact would be reduced in the last resort to an arithmetical problem; and that would then be the holiest thing in the temple of wisdom, to which the principle of sufficient reason would at last have happily conducted us. But all content of the phenomenon would have vanished, and mere form would remain. The "what appears " would be referred to the "how it appears," and this " how " would be the *a priori* knowable, and so entirely dependent on the subject, and hence only for the subject, and so finally mere phantom, representation and form of representation through and through; one could not ask for a thing-in-itself. Suppose this were feasible, then in actual fact the whole world would be derived from the subject, and that would be actually achieved which Fichte by his humbug sought to *seem* to achieve. (123).

Interesting is the analogy Schopenhauer detects between Fichte's philosophy and this reductionist effort. Both have their foundation in a desire to elevate the human being to the position of God. And yet in the end such attempts must fail. In the end we always are transcended by reality. This transcendence appears in the inability of the scientist to do without invoking forces that remain *qualitates occultae*.

There yet remains something on which no explanation can venture, but which it presupposes, namely the forces of nature, the definite mode of operation of things, the quality, the character of every phenomenon, the groundless, that which depend not on the form of the phenomenon, not on the principle of sufficient reason, that to which this form in itself is foreign, yet which has entered this form, and now appears according to its law. This law, however, determines only the appearing, not *that which* appears, only the *How*, not the *What* of the phenomenon, only its form, not its content. Mechanics, physics, and chemistry teach the rules and laws by which the forces of impenetrability, gravitation, rigidity, fluidity,



cohesion, elasticity, heat, light, elective affinities, magnetism, electricity, and so on operate, in other words, the law, the rule observed by these forces in regard to their entry into space and time in each case. But whatever we may do, the forces themselves remain *qualitates occultaes*. For it is just the thing-in-itself, which, by appearing, exhibits those phenomena. (121-122)

To know what effect will be brought about by a certain cause we have to be familiar with its mode of operation. Similarly to know what lets a motive become a motive for a certain human being we have to know his character. Character mediates the mode of the will's appearance, just as laws of nature do. We will return to these *qualitates occultaes* next time when we turn to the Platonic ideas.

## 4

But let us return to Schopenhauer's use of the "will" to find an entry into the thing in itself a bit more: is he not guilty of **anthropomorphizing** the world?

In a way Schopenhauer would have to plead guilty. The very extension of the word "will" suggests this. Is that extension really justified? There would seem to be an obvious dissimilarity between the awareness I have of my body and the awareness I have of all other things in the world. But note that my body is never given to me in isolation, but always as in some sense acted on by other things, by the bright sun for example or the resistant wood. Consider once more the term *Wirklichkeit*.

But why speak then of will rather than just of, say, *Wirklichkeit* or *energeia*? To be sure I experience myself as will. But is the use of the metaphor "will" not more likely to lead to confusion than to illuminate the being of the thing in itself? Schopenhauer might perhaps reply that in reading back into nature his own essence man only reads into it the essence of all that deserves to be called real. But this depends on our ability to abstract the will from its phenomenon and must be supported by a perception of the family resemblance of all things. Schopenhauer of course insists on just this.

Let me return once more to the double awareness we have of ourselves and the related claim that every representation is only a phenomenon of the brain, now as discussed in the second volume:

So far I agree with Kant. But, as the counterpoise of this truth, I have stressed that other truth that we are not merely the *knowing subject*, but, that *we ourselves* are also among those realities or entities we require to know, that *we ourselves are the thing in itself*. Consequently *a way from within* stands open to us to that real inner nature of things to which we cannot penetrate *from without*. It is, so to speak, a subterranean passage, a secret alliance, which, as if by treachery, places us all at once in the fortress that could not be taken by attack from without. Precisely as such the *thing in itself* can come into consciousness only quite directly, namely by *it itself being conscious of itself*: to wish to know it objectively is to desire something contradictory. Everything objective is representation, consequently appearance, in fact mere phenomenon of the brain. (II, 195)

This is among those passages that invite the charge that Schopenhauer invites a psychologistic reading of Kant:

We become most vividly aware of the glaring contrast between the two methods of considering the intellect which in the above remarks are clearly opposed, if we carry the matter to the extreme, and realize that what the one as reflective thought and vivid perception immediately takes up and makes its material, is for the other nothing more than the physiological function of an internal organ, the brain. In fact, we are justified in asserting that the whole of the objective world, so boundless in space, so infinite in time, so unfathomable in its perfection, is really only a certain movement or affection of the pulpy mass in the skull. We then ask in astonishment what this brain is, whose function produces such a phenomenon of all phenomena. What is this matter that can be refined and potentiated to such a pulpy mass, that the stimulation of a few of its particles becomes the conditional supporter of the existence of an objective world? The dread of such questions drove men to the hypothesis of the simple substance of an immaterial soul, which merely dwelt in the brain. We say fearlessly that this pulpy mass also, like every vegetable or animal part, is also an organic structure, like all its humbler relations in the

inferior dwelling-place of our irrational brothers' heads, down to the humblest that scarcely apprehends. Nevertheless, that organic pulpy mass is nature's final product, which presupposes all the rest. (II, 273)

Science remains bound to the realm of representations. It thus can know nothing of a subject. How then is the subject related to the brain? How is the will related to the subject? To the brain? Schopenhauer knows that there can be no adequate account and we should not be surprised that we find him fumbling for words:

This *knowing* and conscious *ego* is related to the will, which is the basis of its phenomenal appearance, as the image in the focus of the concave mirror is to that mirror itself; and, like that image, it has only a conditioned, in fact, properly speaking, a merely apparent reality. Far from being the absolutely first thing (as Fichte taught, for example), it is at bottom tertiary, since it presupposes the organism, and the organism presupposes the will. I admit that everything said here is really only metaphor and figure of speech, in part even hypothetical; but we stand at a point which thoughts and ideas, much less proofs, scarcely reach. (II, 278)

From what we have read it is evident that Schopenhauer places the human being in continuity with the animal. In his discussion of the brain Schopenhauer returns to this point:

Accordingly we see the organ of intelligence, the cerebral system, together with all the organs of sense, keep pace with an increase of needs and wants, and with the complication of the organism. We see the increase of the *representing* part of consciousness (as opposed to the *willing* part) bodily manifesting itself in the ever-increasing proportion of the brain in general to the rest of the nervous system, and of the cerebrum to the cerebellum. (II, 205)

Thus, whereas in the case of the animal the immediate awareness of its satisfied or unsatisfied desire constitutes by far the principal part of its consciousness, and indeed the more so the lower the animal stands, so that the lowest animals are distinguished from plants only by the addition of a dull representation, with man the opposite is the case. Intense as are his

desires may be, more intense even than those of any animal and rising to the level of passions, yet his consciousness nevertheless remains continuously and predominantly concerned and engrossed with representations and ideas. Undoubtedly this is mainly what has given rise to that fundamental error of all philosophers, by virtue of which they make thinking the essential and primary element of the so-called soul, in other words, of man's inner or spiritual life, always putting it first, but regard willing as a mere product of thinking, and as something secondary, additional and subsequent. (II, 205/206)

Therefore that relative predominance of the *knowing* consciousness over the *desiring*, and consequently of the secondary part over the primary, which appears in man, can in particular exceptionally favored individuals, go so far that at the moments of its highest ascendancy, the secondary or knowing part of consciousness detaches itself altogether from the willing part, and passes into free activity for itself, i.e., untouched by the will, and consequently no longer serving it. Thus it becomes purely objective, and the clear mirror of the world, and from it the conceptions of genius then arise, which are the subject of our third book. (II, 206)

Here we return to that inversion of the traditional view of the human being of which I spoke in our very first session. Schopenhauer claims the support of psychological observations and they are indeed interesting.

We often do not know what we desire or fear. For years we can have a desire without admitting it to ourselves or even letting it to come to clear consciousness, because the intellect is not to know anything about it, since the good opinion we have of ourselves would inevitably suffer thereby. But if the wish is fulfilled, we get to know from our joy, not without a feeling of shame, that this is what we desired. (II, 209)

Now if, on the other hand, as all philosophers imagine, the intellect constituted our true inner nature, and the decisions of the will were a mere result of knowledge, then precisely *that* motive alone, from which we *imagined* we acted, would necessarily be decisive for our moral worth, on

the analogy that the intention, not the result, is decisive in this respect. But then the distinction between imagined and actual motive would really be impossible. (II, 210)

## 7. The Platonic Idea and its Role in Science

### 1

Let me return to a question I raised last time: when Schopenhauer uses the "will" to find an entry into the thing-in-itself, is he not guilty of **anthropomorphizing** the world?

In a way Schopenhauer would have to plead guilty. The very extension of the word "will" suggests this. Is that extension really justified? There would seem to be an obvious dissimilarity between the awareness I have of my body and the awareness I have of all other things in the world. But note that my body is never given to me in isolation, but always as in some sense acted on by other things, by the bright sun for example or the resistant wood. Consider once more the term *Wirklichkeit*.

But why speak here of will, rather the just of, say, *energeia*? To be sure I experience myself as will. But is the use of the metaphor "will" not more likely to lead to confusion than to illuminate the being of the thing in itself? Schopenhauer might perhaps reply that in reading back into nature his own essence he only reads into it the essence of what first of all deserves to be called real. But, if it is not to mislead us, this depends on our ability to abstract the will from its phenomenon and must be supported by a perception of the **family resemblance** of all things. Schopenhauer of course insists on just this. Interesting in this connection is the way Schopenhauer understands the relationship of his position and that of Kant:

However, to show the true point of contact between my philosophy and Kant's, I will here anticipate the second book, and stress the fact that, in his fine explanation of the compatibility of freedom with necessity (*Critique of Pure Reason*, first edition, pp. 532-554, and *Critique of Practical Reason*, pp. 224-231 of the Rosenkranz edition), Kant demonstrates how one and the same action can be perfectly explained on the one hand as necessarily arising from the man's character, from the influence he has undergone in the course of his life, and from the motives now present to him, and yet on the other hand must be regarded as the work of his free will. In the same sense he says, par. 53 of the

*Prolegomena*: "It is true that natural necessity will attach to all connexion of cause and effect in the world of sense, yet, on the other hand, freedom is conceded to that cause which is itself no phenomenon (although forming the foundation of the phenomenon). Hence nature and freedom can without contradiction be attributed to the same thing, but in a different reference; at one time as a phenomenon, at another as a thing-in-itself." Now what Kant teaches of the phenomenon of man and his actions is extended by my teaching to *all* the phenomena in nature, since it makes their foundation the will as thing-in-itself. This procedure is justified first of all by the fact that it must not be assumed that man is specifically, *toto genere*, and radically different from the rest of beings and things in nature, but rather that he is different only in degree. From this anticipatory digression I turn back to our consideration of the inadequacy of physics to give us the ultimate explanation of things. I say, therefore, everything is certainly physical, yet not explainable. (II, 173, 174)

Kant had based on this insufficiency of physical explanation his account of the compatibility of necessity and freedom.

## 2

Inseparably bound up with what we discussed last time is Schopenhauer's appropriation of Plato's ideas. The Platonic idea, as Schopenhauer understands it, would seem to occupy a place half way between will and representation, to mediate between the two. Let me begin by returning once more to the duality of representation and thing-in-itself. All representations are

1. subject to the subject-object form
2. subject to the principle, of sufficient reason.

The thing-in-itself, Schopenhauer proclaims, lies outside of these. It is the completely other: transcendence.

The thing-in-itself, as such, is free from all forms of knowledge, even the most universal, namely that of being an object for the subject; in other

words, it is something entirely different from the representation. Now, if this thing-in-itself, as I believe I have sufficiently proved and made clear, is the will, then, considered as such and apart from its phenomenon, it lies outside time and space, and accordingly knows no multiplicity, and consequently is one. (128)

Representations are understood by Schopenhauer as the objectifications of this will. These objectifications show different degrees.

Therefore the plurality of things in space and time that together are the *objectivity* of the will, does not concern the will, which in spite of such plurality, remains indivisible. It is not the case of there being a smaller part of will in the stone and a larger part in man, for the relation of part and whole belongs exclusively to space, and has no longer any meaning the moment we have departed from this form of intuition or perception. More and less concern only the phenomenon, that is to say, the visibility, the objectification. There is a higher degree of this objectification in the plant than in the stone; a higher degree in the animal than in the plant; indeed, the will's passage into visibility, its objectification, has gradations as endless as those between the feeblest twilight and the brightest sunlight, the loudest tone and the softest echo. Later on, we shall come back to a consideration of these degrees of visibility that belong to the objectification of the will, to the reflection of its nature. (128)

The discussion of cause, stimulus, and motive already hinted at these. Schopenhauer considers human beings the highest manifestation of the will. In them the will manifests itself most completely.

One might ask once more whether Schopenhauer is not guilty here of an undue anthropocentrism. But let us bracket this question and the value connotations of higher and lower.

Accordingly, what follows, and this has already impressed itself as a matter of course on every student of Plato, will be in the next book the subject of a detailed discussion. Those different grades of the will's objectification, expressed in innumerable individuals, exist as the



unattained patterns of these, or as the eternal forms of things. Not themselves entering into time and space, the medium of individuals, they remain fixed, subject to no change, always being, never having become. The particular things, however, arise and pass away; they are always becoming and never are. Now I say that these *grades of the objectification of will* are, nothing but *Plato's Ideas*. (129)

The Platonic idea is thus subject to the subject-object polarity, but not to the principle of sufficient reason and thus not locatable in space and time.

Several questions are raised by Schopenhauer's introduction of these ideas:

1. What evidence is there for them?
2. How justified is their identification with Plato's ideas?
3. In what relationship do they stand to the will?

### 3

Let me turn to the first: What evidence is there for Schopenhauer's Platonic ideas? Given Schopenhauer's understanding of reason we know already that we will have to ground the claim that there are Platonic ideas in some kind of intuitive understanding. He has to appeal to some sort of experience. As we shall see, it is primarily aesthetic experience that is relevant in this context and we shall return to it when we turn to the third book. In the second book the evidence is tied to a consideration of the **nature of explanation**. Consider an explanation that accounts for a certain effect, say, a falling stone. Does the stone fall because of gravity? Schopenhauer rejects this:

It is therefore wrong to say "gravity is the cause of a stone's falling"; the cause is rather the nearness of the earth, since it attracts the stone. Take away the earth, and the stone will not fall, although gravity remains. The force itself lies entirely outside the chain of causes and effects, which presupposes time, since it has meaning only in reference thereto; but the force lies also outside time. (131)

Although presupposed by causal explanation, gravity itself lies outside the chain of causes and effects. It is, Schopenhauer would say, a *qualitas occulta*.

Similarly, when we try to explain the behavior of a person, we can say that he acted because of certain motives. But this explanation presupposes an understanding of the individual's character, which is the individual's own and whose contours can only be discerned by studying that individual and by perceiving a certain family resemblance linking his actions.

At the higher grades of the will's objectivity, we see individuality standing out prominently, especially in man, as the great difference of individual characters, i.e., as complete personality, outwardly expressed by strongly marked individual physiognomy, which embraces the whole bodily form. No animal has this individuality in anything like such a degree; only the higher animals have a trace of it, but the character of the species completely predominates over it, and for this reason there is but little individual physiognomy. The farther down we go, the more completely is every trace of individual character lost in the general character of the species, and only the physiognomy of the species remains. We know the psychological character of the species, and from this know exactly what is to be expected from the individual. On the other hand, in the human species every individual has to be studied and fathomed by himself, and this is of the greatest difficulty, if we wish to determine beforehand with some degree of certainty his course of action, on account of the possibility of dissimulation which makes its first appearance with the faculty of reason. (131)

The animal lacks such an individual character, Schopenhauer asserts.

Therefore, while every person is to be regarded as a specially determined and characterized phenomenon of the will, and even to a certain extent as a special Idea, in the animal this individual character as a whole is lacking, since the species alone has a characteristic significance. This trace of the individual character fades away more and more, the farther we go from man. Finally, plants no longer have any individual characteristics save those that can be fully explained from the favourable or unfavourable external influences of soil, climate, and other contingencies. Finally, in

the inorganic kingdom of nature all individuality completely disappears.  
(132)

Perceiving a Platonic idea involves thus a perception of the family resemblance that links a class of phenomena, an intuition that lets us understand them as expressions of the same force.

This unity of its inner being in all its phenomena, this unchangeable constancy of its appearance, as soon as the conditions are present for this, under the guidance of causality, is called a *law of nature*. If such a law is once known through *experience*, then the phenomenon of that natural law whose character is expressed and laid down in it can be accurately predetermined and calculated. (133)

Consider once more the story of Newton and the apple. This discussion should be compared to Kant's discussion of the relationship of the **teleological** and the **aesthetic judgment** as species of the **reflective judgment**.

A law of nature expresses the form of the phenomena subject to that law, which in turn expresses the Idea. It is important to keep in mind here that we do not need to have a theory of the nature of gravity in order to determine, e.g., the laws of moving bodies. Neither Galileo nor Newton thought that they had such an understanding of gravity.

Schopenhauer understands laws of nature as generalized facts. What laws of nature there are is something that only attempts to explain natural events can show.

**To say that there are many Platonic ideas is to say that there is not just one law of nature that can account for all the phenomena of nature.** Let me try to make this a bit clearer by drawing once again on some notions from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

6.23 The law of causality is not a law, but the form of a law.

I hope it has become clear that this is just what Schopenhauer could say. Newtonian mechanics, e.g. gives a particular content to this form:

6.341 Newtonian mechanics, for example, brings the description of the universe to a unified form. Let us imagine a white surface with irregular black spots. We now say: Whatever kind of picture these make, I can always get as near as I like to its description, if I cover the surface with a sufficiently fine square network and now say of every square that it is

white or black. In this way I shall have brought the description of the surface to a unified form. The form is arbitrary, because I could have applied with equal success a net with a triangular or a hexagonal mesh... To the different networks correspond different systems of describing the world. Mechanics determine a form of description by saying: All propositions in the description of the world must be obtained in a given way from a number of given propositions — the mechanical axioms.

We can see that it is not altogether arbitrary which network I choose. And imagine the boundary of my spots to be made up of circle fragments. It is clear that in this case a rectangular network would fail to do justice to this quality of my world. The fact that a certain spot is described more accurately or simply by one rather than another network shows something about the world and its structure.

Now a question: **is it possible to construct according to a single plan all true propositions that we need for the description of the world?** (6. 343) If so, there would have to be only one science, one kind of explanation. To use Schopenhauer's language, there would only be one degree of objectification of the will. — What about the explanations we use in our everyday dealings with the world?

I have already touched on the recurrent hope to reduce all descriptions to mechanics, or better still, to arithmetic. The latter Schopenhauer rules out by an *a priori* argument: to reduce everything to arithmetic would be to lose sight of **experience**, of **reality**, of **content**. But the reduction to mechanics cannot similarly be ruled out *on a priori* grounds:

The etiology and the philosophy of nature never interfere with each other; on the contrary, they go hand in hand, considering the same object from different points of view. Etiology gives an account of the causes which necessarily produce the particular phenomenon to be explained. It shows, as the basis of all its explanations, the universal forces that are active in all these causes and effects. It accurately determines these forces, their number, their differences, and then all the effects in which each force appears differently according to the difference of the circumstances, always in keeping with its own peculiar character. It discloses this

character in accordance with an infallible rule that is called *a law of nature*. As soon as physics has achieved all this in every respect, it has attained perfection. In inorganic nature there is then no longer any force unknown, and there is no longer any effect which has not been shown to be the phenomenon of one of these forces under definite circumstances according to a law of nature. (140/141)

Schopenhauer clearly thought the business of physics pretty much completed. In this he was mistaken. The chosen form of description proved inadequate to certain phenomena.

That etiology and morphology do not interfere with each other is suggested by the very essence of a law of nature:

However, a law of nature remains merely the observed rule by which nature proceeds every time, as soon as certain definite circumstances occur. Therefore we can certainly define a law of nature as a fact generally expressed, *un fait generalize*, a complete statement of all the laws of nature would be only a complete catalogue of facts. The consideration of nature is then completed by *morphology*, which enumerates, compares, and arranges all the enduring forms of organic nature. (141)

Does the world permit the reduction of all forms of description to just one? Schopenhauer clearly thought that this was not the case. Again and again we find him arguing against such a reduction. Psychology he was convinced could not be reduced to biology, nor biology to physics.

It is well known that all those views, so often exploded, have again reappeared with renewed audacity in recent times. If we examine the matter closely, then ultimately at the basis of these views is the presupposition that the organism is only an aggregate of phenomena of physical, chemical, and mechanical forces that have come together in it by chance, and have brought about the organism as a freak of nature without further significance. Accordingly, the organism of an animal or of a human being would be, philosophically considered, not the exhibition of a particular Idea, in other words, not itself immediate objectivity of the will

at a definite higher grade, but there would appear in it only those Ideas that objectify the will in electricity, chemistry, and mechanism. Hence the organism would be just as fortuitously put together from the chance meeting of these forces as are the forms of men and animals in clouds or stalactites; and hence in itself it would be no more interesting. (142)

Schopenhauer would have rejected Otto Neurath's dream of one unified science,

From all that has been said, it follows that it is indeed a mistake of natural science for it to try to refer the higher grades of the will's objectivity to the lower ones. Failing to recognize and denying original and self-existing natural forces is just as unsound as is the groundless assumption of characteristic forces, where what occurs is only a particular kind of manifestation of something already known. Therefore Kant is right when he says that it is absurd to hope for the Newton of a blade of grass, in other words, for the man who would reduce the blade of grass to phenomena of physical and chemical forces, of which it would be a chance concretion, and so a mere freak of nature. (143)

Still, *a priori* the claim for a reduction of all true propositions to just one form cannot be ruled out. Only experience will tell.

What then is the answer to the first of my questions? What evidence is there for a plurality of Platonic ideas? Schopenhauer could point to the heterogeneity of our forms of explanation, which in turn reflects differences in the modes of behavior of the things to be explained. But this would seem to be finally an empirical matter.

#### 4

Let me therefore turn briefly to the second question: how justified is the Identification of Schopenhauer's ideas with Plato's? If we were to understand Plato's ideas to be universals, then there would be an obvious misinterpretation. But Plato's ideas, as indeed the word *eidos* suggests, cannot be done justice to in that way. Not that they are to be identified with Schopenhauer's thing-in-itself. They are objects of perception, although not subject to the principle of sufficient reason. But what kind of perception are we speaking about? An aesthetic perception? This invites reflection on

the relationship of Schopenhauer's Platonic idea to Kant's aesthetic idea and of both to Plato's. But interesting as it is in its own right, little depends on our answer to this second question. Let me therefore go on to the third question: in what relationship do Schopenhauer's Platonic ideas stand to the will?

## 5

The answer should by now have become obvious? They represent degrees of the will's objectification. The same essence reveals itself in all its manifestations. Everywhere we meet with an endless striving. All of the different expressions of the will share thus a family resemblance. This allows us to speak of them as phenomena of the same will.

In fact, absence of all aim, of all limits, belongs to the essential nature of the will in itself, which is an endless striving. This was touched on above when centrifugal force was mentioned. It also reveals itself in the simplest form of the lowest grade of the will's objectivity, namely gravitation, the constant striving of which we see, although a final goal for it is obviously impossible. For if, according to its will, all existing matter were united into a lump, then within this lump gravity, ever striving towards the centre, would still always struggle with impenetrability as rigidity or elasticity. Therefore the striving of matter can always be impeded only, never fulfilled or satisfied. (164)

The lowest as well as the highest phenomena demonstrate this:

Finally, the same thing is also seen in human endeavours and desires that buoy us up with the vain hope that their fulfillment is always the final goal of willing. But, as soon as they are attained, they no longer look the same, and so are soon forgotten, become antiquated, and are really, although not admittedly, always laid aside as vanished illusions. It is fortunate enough when something to desire and to strive for still remains, so that the game may be kept up of the constant transition from desire to satisfaction, and from that to a fresh desire, the rapid course of which is called happiness, the slow course sorrow, and so that this game may not come to a standstill,

showing itself as a fearful, life-destroying boredom, a lifeless longing without a definite object, a deadening languor. According to all this, the will always knows, when knowledge enlightens it, what it wills here and now, but never what it wills in general. Every individual act has a purpose or end; willing as a whole has no end in view. (164-165)

The will is will to live. In nature this manifests itself as a striving to ensure the survival of the species (cf. *Symposium*). Why should the animal be possessed of such a desire? For Schopenhauer there is no answer. All of the activity of nature seems to have a point in the short run, while in the long run, according to Schopenhauer, it is recognized to be finally pointless. That is why teleology does not lead to theology. The second volume makes this point more forcefully than the first. Let me therefore conclude with some appropriately pessimistic selections from it:

In this connexion we call to mind how in general the life of most insects is nothing but ceaseless labour for preparing nourishment and dwelling for the future offspring that will come from their eggs. After the offspring have consumed the nourishment and have turned into the chrysalis stage, they enter into life merely to begin the same task again from the beginning. We then reflect how, in a similar manner, the life of birds is taken up with their distant and wearisome migrations, then with the building of the nest and the procuring of food for the offspring, and how these themselves have to play the same role in the following year; and thus all work constantly for the future that afterwards becomes bankrupt. If we consider the foregoing, we cannot help looking round for the reward of all this skill and exertion, for the end or aim which these animals have before their eyes, and to which they aspire so restlessly; in short, we cannot help asking what comes of all this, and what is attained by the animal existence that demands such immense preparations. And there is nothing to show but the satisfaction of hunger and sexual passion, and in any case a little momentary gratification, such as falls to the lot of every individual animal, now and then, between its endless need and exertions. (II, 353)



But the futility and fruitlessness of the struggle of the whole phenomenon are more readily grasped in the simple and easily observable life of animals. The variety and multiplicity of the organisations, the ingenuity of the means, by which each is adapted to its element and to its prey, here contrasts clearly with the absence of any lasting final aim. Instead of this, we see only momentary gratification, fleeting pleasure conditioned by wants, much and long suffering, constant struggle, *bellum omnium*, everything a hunter and everything hunted, pressure, want, need, and anxiety, shrieking and howling; and this goes on in *saecula saeculorum*, or until once again the crust of the planet breaks. Junghuhn relates that in Java he saw an immense field covered with skeletons, and took it to be a battle-field. However, they were nothing but skeletons of large turtles five feet long, three feet broad, and of equal height. These turtles come this way from the sea, in order to lay their eggs, and are then seized by wild dogs (*Canis rutilans*); with their united strength, these dogs lay them on their backs, tear open their lower armour, the small scales of the belly, and so devour them alive. But then a tiger often pounces on the dogs. Now all this misery is repeated thousands and thousands of times, year in, year out. For this, then, are these turtles born. For what offence must they suffer this agony? What is the point of this whole scene of horror? The only answer is that the will-to-live thus objectifies itself. (II, 354)

But what is the ultimate aim of it all? To sustain ephemeral and harassed individuals through a short span of time, in the most fortunate case with endurable want and comparative painlessness, yet boredom is at once on the lookout for this; then the propagation of this race and of its activities. With this evident want of proportion between the effort and the reward, the will-to-live, taken objectively, appears to us from this point of view as a fool, or taken subjectively, as a delusion. Seized by this, every living thing works with the utmost exertion of its strength for something that has

no value. But on closer consideration, we shall find here also that it is rather a blind urge, an impulse wholly without ground or motive. (II, 357)

## 8. Aesthetic Experience

### 1

I would like to begin by returning to the story of Newton and his apple. Newton responds to what Schopenhauer calls a Platonic Idea, i.e., he perceives family resemblance in at first seemingly unrelated things and in response to such a perception formulates his laws of motion. A law of nature describes the form of the phenomena subject to that law, which in turn expresses the Idea. It is important to keep in mind here that we do not need to have an explanation of the nature of gravity in order to determine, e.g., the laws of moving bodies. Neither Galileo nor Newton thought that they had such an explanation of gravity.

Schopenhauer understands laws of nature as generalized facts. What laws of nature there are is something that only attempts to explain natural events can show.

**To say that there are many Platonic ideas is to say that there is not just one law of nature that can account for all the phenomena of nature.** This leaves us with the question: **is it possible to construct according to a single plan all true propositions that we need for the description of the world?** (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.343) What evidence is there then for a plurality of Platonic ideas? Schopenhauer could point to the heterogeneity of our forms of explanation, which in turn reflects differences in the modes of behavior of the things to be explained.

### 2

But let us turn to the Third Book. I would like to approach it by turning first to two statements by the painter Giorgio de Chirico. You will find them discussed in my *The Broken Frame*.<sup>6</sup> The first is from his "Meditations of a Painter" and dates from 1912.

Let me recount how I had a revelation of a picture that I will show this year at the *Salon d'Autonne*, entitled *Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon*.

One clear autumnal afternoon I was sitting on a bench in the middle of the

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<sup>6</sup> Karsten Harries, *The Broken Frame. Three Lectures* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1989).

Piazza Santa Croce in Florence. It was of course not the first time I had seen this square. I was coming out of a long and painful intestinal illness, and I was in a nearly morbid state of sensitivity. The whole world, down to the marble of the buildings and the fountains, seemed to me to be convalescent. In the middle of the square rises a statue of Dante draped in a long cloak, holding his works, clasped against his body, his laurel-crowned head bent thoughtfully earthward. The statue is in white marble, but time has given it a gray cast, very agreeable to the eye. The autumn sun, warm and unloving, lit the statue and the church façade. Then I had the strange impression that I was looking at all these things for the first time, and the composition of my picture came to the mind's eye. Now, each time I look at this picture I again see that moment. Nevertheless the moment is an enigma to me, for it is inexplicable. And I would like to call the work that sprang from it an enigma.

The painter here tells of how the idea of a work of art, a painting came to him. The account appears very personal, so we should not be too quick to generalize from this account of the nature of artistic inspiration. But with this warning in mind, let us look more carefully at the passage:

1. The painter links his revelation to a peculiar **dislocation** brought about by poor health. The artist appears here as someone who takes leave from the everyday and its ways of seeing and understanding.
2. Note that this dislocation brings with it a **transfiguration** of the familiar, which becomes mysterious, enigmatic.
3. Transfiguration here means also a transformation of our usual sense of time. De Chirico speaks of a magical, enigmatic **moment**, which allows him to see things **as if for the first time**. In this sense the painter's vision is an **original seeing**.
4. The painting **recalls** or **repeats** that original moment.
5. Striking is the way our attention is called to the quality of the **light**, an autumn light that is said to be warm and **unloving**. I want to emphasize this **dissociation of light and love**.

The second statement, dating from the following year, is from "Mystery and Creation." Once again de Chirico attempts to describe the kind of experience that gives rise to art. Here is the text:

I remember one vivid winter's day at Versailles. Silence and calm reigned supreme. Everything gazed at me with mysterious, questioning eyes: And then I realized that every corner of the palace, every column, every window possessed a spirit, an impenetrable soul. I looked at the marble heroes, motionless in the lucid air, beneath the frozen rays of the winter sun which pours down on us without love, like perfect song. A bird was warbling in a window cage. At that moment I grew aware of the mystery which urges man to create certain strange forms. And the creation seemed more extraordinary than the creators.

Once again the painter describes a remembered aesthetic experience. Several moments of the first description recur:

1. Once again there is the **transfiguration** of the familiar.
2. Note the apparent **freezing of time** in aesthetic experience, mirroring here the frozen landscape.
3. The **dissociation of light and love**.
4. The association of such loveless light with **artistic perfection**.
5. The paradigm of such perfection is said to be **song**.

But let me return to the crucial simile:

I looked at the marble heroes, motionless in the lucid air, beneath the frozen rays of the winter sun which pours down on us without love, like perfect song.

Is the beautiful object like a sun? In what way? Does **beauty illuminate**? Does it allow us to see? How are beauty and visibility linked? And why does de Chirico emphasize **without love**? When philosophical speculation on the nature of the beautiful began, the beautiful was indeed likened to **light**, but it was also brought into an intimate relationship to **love**. (Cf. Xenophon's *Symposium*)

While the quoted texts give the impression of personal recollections, Chirico remembers not only what he experienced on the Piazza Santa Croce in Florence or at

Versailles. He also remembers a passage from Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*.

Light is the largest diamond in the crown of beauty, and has the most decided influence on the knowledge of every beautiful object. Its presence generally is an indispensable condition; its favorable arrangement enhances even the beauty of the beautiful. But above all else, the beautiful in architecture is enhanced by the favor of light, and through it even the most insignificant thing becomes a beautiful object. Now if in the depth of winter, when the whole of nature is frozen and stiff, we see the rays of the setting sun reflected by masses of stone, where they illuminate without warming, and are thus favorable only to the purest kind of knowledge, not to the will, then the contemplation of the beautiful effect of light on these masses moves us into the state of pure knowing, as all beauty does. (203)

Once again we meet with the association of beauty with light. Light is not only necessary for something to be seen, but its favorable arrangement is said to enhance beauty, making what is already beautiful even more beautiful. Beauty once again seems to have something to do with visibility. The more beautiful is also more visible. We shall have plenty of occasions to return to this association of beauty and light, but what I am more interested in here is the way in which Schopenhauer, too, speaks of the winter sun, which illuminates, but does not warm. He himself explains that significance for us.

Yet here, through the faint recollection of the lack of warmth from these rays, in other words, of the absence of the principle of life, a certain transcending of the interest of the will is required. There is a slight challenge to abide in pure knowledge, to turn away from all willing, and precisely in this way we have a transition from the feeling of the beautiful to that of the sublime. It is the faintest trace of the sublime in the beautiful, and beauty itself appears here only in a slight degree. (203)

Beauty is thought here in opposition to the interest of the will. That interest must be left behind. But love, for Schopenhauer, is very much an expression of the interested will. Schopenhauer thus places aesthetic experience and its object, the beautiful, in opposition

to the will and to love. De Chirico thus only follows Schopenhauer when he links the beautiful to a loveless light.

Schopenhauer in turn is hardly original when he places the beautiful in opposition to life and its interests. He only develops Kant's famous definition of the beautiful as the object of an entirely **disinterested satisfaction**. And Kant, in turn, looks back to the eighteenth century philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, who gave us not only the word "aesthetics" as a name for the philosophical inquiry into aesthetic experience, but, also established aesthetics as a discipline, one of the main branches of philosophy.

### 3

When we experience something aesthetically our normal attitude to things is bracketed. The voices of the everyday are silenced. With reference to Kant, such a bracketing is often said to be central to the aesthetic experience. In Schopenhauer's words, in such experience

Raised up by the power of the mind, we relinquish the ordinary way of considering things, and cease to follow under the guidance of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason merely their relations to one other, whose final goal is always the relation to our own will. Thus we no longer consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things, but simply and solely the *what*. Further, we do not let abstract thought, the concepts of reason, take possession of our consciousness, but, instead of all this, devote the whole power of our mind to perception, sink ourselves completely therein, and let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation of the natural object actually present, whether it be a landscape, a tree, a rock, a crag, a building, or anything else. We *lose* ourselves entirely in this object, to use a pregnant expression; in other words we forget even our individuality, our will, and continue only to exist only as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object, so that it is as though the object alone existed without anyone to perceive it, and thus we are no longer able to separate the perceiver from the perception, but the two have become one, since entire consciousness is

filled and occupied by a single image of perception. (178-179)

In aesthetic experience the human being exploits that distance from himself as desiring, a distance that is part of his intellectual nature and makes him a being who not only desires, but knows. For a time the will within him is negated. The human being is no longer interested. Schopenhauer's debt to Kant here requires no comment. Art

therefore pauses at this particular thing; it stops the wheel of time; for it the relations vanish; its object is only the essential, the Idea. We can, therefore, define it accurately *as the way of considering things independently of the principle of sufficient reason*, in contrast to the way of considering them which proceeds in exact accordance with this principle, and is the way of science and experience. This latter method of consideration can be compared to an endless line running horizontally, and the former to a vertical line cutting the horizontal at any point. The method of consideration that follows the principle of sufficient reason is the rational method, and it alone is valid and useful in practical life and in science. The method of consideration that looks away from the content of this principle is the method of genius, which is valid and useful in art alone. The first is Aristotle's method of; the second is, on the whole, Plato's. (185)

The concept of genius preoccupied aesthetic thinking of the day — and once again we should ask ourselves why this should be so.

The *gift of genius* is nothing but the completest *objectivity*, i.e., the objective tendency of the mind, as opposed to the subjective directed to our own person, i.e., to the will. Accordingly, genius is the capacity to remain in a state of pure perception, to lose oneself in perception, to remove from the service of the will the knowledge which originally existed only for this service. In other words, genius is the ability to leave entirely out of sight our own interest, our willing, and our aims, and consequently to discard our own personality for a time, in order to remain *pure knowing subject*, the clear eye of the world; and this not merely for moments, but with the necessary continuity and conscious thought to



enable us to repeat by deliberate art what has been apprehended and “what in wavering apparition gleams fix in its place with thoughts that stand forever.” (Goethe’s Faust, Bayard Taylor’s translation) (185-186).

We can make essentially the same point by saying that the aesthetic attitude is marked by its **objectivity**. It is indeed in this that Schopenhauer seeks the essence of **genius**. Rather remarkably the power of genius appears here first of all as a power of concentrated, detached observation. It follows that for Schopenhauer spectator and creator are essentially the same:

The work of art is merely a means of facilitating that knowledge in which this pleasure consists. That the Idea comes to us more easily from the work of art than directly from nature and from reality, arises solely from the fact that the artist, who knew only the Idea and not reality, clearly repeated in his work only the Idea, separated it out from reality, and omitted all disturbing contingencies. (195)

Most of us lack the power to sustain such objectivity. For this reason, Schopenhauer suggests that we are soon finished with everything. We look for something, and when we have found it, we are done with it. Indeed, we often even look at art in this way. We go to a museum to see some masterpiece. Having seen it we check it off on our mental list of things to have seen and are done with it. How much time do people spend with pictures in a museum?

This divorce of aesthetic experience from everyday interest suggests that there is a tension between the demands of art and those of everyday life, a tension that can lead the genius out of the world of the normal and taken for granted into madness. Schopenhauer cites a number of authors in support of his view, including Plato and his myth of the cave. Those who have left the cave and seen the sun, do not function well on their return to the cave's darkness. Art implies a leave-taking from the normal, from common sense. Given the sense of the many, what the artist has to offer may often seem nonsense.

Why does the aesthetic experience please? Why do we take pleasure in the beautiful? By now Schopenhauer’s answer should be obvious: Schopenhauer sees the human being as desiring satisfaction, yet denied such satisfaction by his own being, which forever lets him look for fulfillment in the future, beyond the present. The

**temporality of aesthetic experience** is very different from the **temporality of everyday life**. It allows us to exist in the present, at one with ourselves. In time it gives us a fleeting deliverance from the burden of time, a **semblance of redemption**.

No attained object of willing can give a satisfaction that lasts and no longer declines; but it is always like the alms thrown to the beggar, which reprieves him today so that his misery may be prolonged till tomorrow. Therefore, so long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with its constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we can never obtain lasting happiness or peace. Essentially, it is all the same whether we pursue or flee, fear harm or aspire to enjoyment; care for the constantly demanding will, no matter in what form, continually fills and moves consciousness; but without peace and calm true well-being is absolutely impossible. Thus the subject of willing is constantly lying on the revolving wheel of Ixion, is always drawing water in the sieve of the Danaids, and is the eternally thirsting Tantalus. (196)

Art delivers us, if only for a time, from that contradiction between what we are and what we want that is part of our being.

When, however, an external cause or inward disposition suddenly raises us out of the endless stream of willing, and snatches knowledge from the thralldom of the will, the attention is now no longer directed to the motives of willing, but comprehends things free from their relation to the will. Thus it considers things without interest, without subjectivity, purely objectively, it is entirely given up to them in so far as they are merely representations, but not motives. Then all at once the peace, always sought but always escaping us on that first path of willing, comes to us of its own accord, and all is well with us. It is the painless state, prized by Epicurus as the highest good and as the state of the gods; for that moment we are delivered from the miserable pressure of the will. We celebrate the Sabbath of the penal servitude of willing; the wheel of Ixion stands still. (196)

Art provides relief from the burden of life.

## 4

For Schopenhauer the mode of seeing the world in terms of the principle of sufficient reason is inseparably tied to a desire to understand and through understanding master the world. Understanding and reason are themselves expressions of the will and as such interested. To the extent that we see the world aesthetically we also bracket our usual reliance on reason

As it is the principle of sufficient reason that places the objects in this relation to the body, and so to the will, the sole endeavor of knowledge, serving this will, will be to get to know concerning objects just those relations that are laid down by the principle of sufficient reason, and thus to follow their many different connections in space, time, and causality. For only through these is the object *interesting* to the individual, in other words, has it a relation to the will. Therefore, knowledge that serves the will really knows nothing more about objects than their relations, knows the objects only in so far as they exist at such a time, in such a place, in such and such circumstances, from such and such causes, and in such and such effects — in a word, as particular things. (177)

As the interesting is bracketed, the aesthetic experience is no longer directed to the particular. But Schopenhauer defined the **Platonic idea** as a representation that as such is still subject to the form of subject and object, but not to the principle of sufficient reason. Pure knowing and the Platonic idea belong together. So, as we have seen, do art and science.

The individual, as such, knows only particular things; the pure subject of knowledge knows only Ideas. For the individual is the subject of knowledge in its relation to a definite particular phenomenon of will and in subjection thereto. (179)

In the aesthetic experience the human being frees himself from this subjection. Thus freeing himself he also fees himself from his individuality. In time he is himself in a sense transported beyond time:

For the Idea and the pure subject of knowing always appear simultaneously in consciousness as necessary correlatives, and with this appearance all distinction of time at once vanishes, as both are wholly foreign to the principle of sufficient reason in all its forms. Both lie outside the relations laid down by this principle; they can be compared to the rainbow and the sun that take no part in the constant movement and succession of the falling drops. Therefore if, for example, I contemplate a tree aesthetically, i.e., with artistic eyes, and thus recognize not it, but its Idea, it is immediately of no importance whether it is this tree or its ancestor that flourished a thousand years ago, and whether the contemplator is this individual, or any other living anywhere and at any time. The particular thing and the knowing individual are abolished with the principle of sufficient reason, and nothing remains but the Idea and the pure subject of knowing, which together constitute the adequate objectivity of will at this grade. (209)

For Plato, too, the beautiful is the descent of the Platonic idea into the visible: *splendor formae*, as the medievals put it. Beauty is understood as the epiphany of the Platonic idea:

When clouds move, the figures they form are not essential, but indifferent to them. But that as elastic vapor they are pressed together, driven off, spread out, and torn asunder by the force of the wind, this is their nature, this is the essence of the forces that are objectified in them, this is the Idea. The figures in each case are only for the individual observer. To the brook which rolls downward over the stones, the eddies, waves, the foam-forms exhibited by it are indifferent and inessential; but that it follows gravity, and behaves as an inelastic, perfectly mobile, formless, and transparent fluid, this is its essential nature, this, *if known through perception*, is the Idea. Those foam-forms exist only for us so long as we know as individuals. The ice on the window-pane is formed into crystals according to the laws of crystallization, which reveal the essence of the natural force here appearing, which exhibit the Idea. But the trees and flowers formed

by the ice on the window-pane are inessential, and exist only for us. What appears in clouds, brook, and crystal is the feeblest echo of that will which appears more completely in the plant, still more completely in the animal, and most completely in man. (182)

Passages such as this had a profound impact on artists such as the members of the *Blauer Reiter*.

5

Once again following Kant, Schopenhauer distinguishes between the beautiful and the sublime. And again he is following tradition when he insists that our experience of the sublime is marked by tension, while that of the beautiful is not. Consider his continuation of a passage that I read you earlier:

Yet here, through the faint recollection of the lack of warmth from those rays, in other words, of the absence of the principle of life, a certain transcending of the interest of the will is required. There is a slight challenge to abide in pure knowledge, to turn away from all willing, and precisely in this way we have a transition from the feeling of the beautiful to that of the sublime. It is the faintest trace of the sublime in the beautiful, and beauty itself appears here only in a slight degree. (203)

Schopenhauer also follows Kant in his distinction between a dynamical and a mathematical sublime. According to Schopenhauer, too, it is the human power of self-transcendence that characterizes the sublime. The difference between Kant and Schopenhauer becomes apparent, however, when we inquire into the relationship of the beautiful and the sublime. Kant had drawn a sharp distinction between the two. According to Schopenhauer they are continuous. One is tempted to say: Schopenhauer tends to reduce the beautiful to the sublime. And this raises an interesting question: why is it that the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime occupies such an important place in aesthetic speculation around 1800 only to disappear subsequently? Is it perhaps that the aesthetic of the sublime displaces that of the beautiful? Is there need for a distinction between **beauty that comes before and another that comes after sublimity**? (Possible paper topic: the sublime as category of the epochal threshold.)

Kant had linked the beautiful to a sense of being at home in nature. Schopenhauer would rather underscore homelessness. The sublime involves an experience of leave-taking from the world and its concerns. Beauty remains when this leave-taking has been accomplished and not even the trace of the desires we have left behind remains.

## 9. The Classification of the Arts

### 1

Last time I began my discussion of Schopenhauer's philosophy of art. Let me sum up this discussion and at the same time introduce today's topic with a brief quote:

I return to our discussion of the aesthetic impression. Knowledge of the beautiful always supposes, simultaneously and inseparably, a purely knowing subject and a known Idea as object. But yet the source of aesthetic enjoyment will lie sometimes rather in the apprehension of the known Idea, sometimes rather in the bliss and peace of mind of pure knowledge free from all willing, and thus from all individuality and the pain that results therefrom. (212)

Aesthetic enjoyment, Schopenhauer suggests, will be sometimes more objective, sometimes more subjective. He goes on to suggest that the lower we are on the ladder of objectification the more the subjective moment will predominate:

And, in fact, this predominance of the one or the other constituent element of aesthetic enjoyment will depend on whether the intuitively grasped Idea is a higher or a lower grade of the will's objectivity. Thus with aesthetic contemplation (in real life or through the medium of art) of natural beauty in the inorganic and vegetable kingdoms and of the works of architecture, the enjoyment of pure, will-less knowing will predominate, because the Ideas here apprehended are only low grades of the will's objectivity, and therefore are not phenomena of deep significance and suggestive content. On the other hand, if animals and human beings are the object of aesthetic contemplation or presentation, the enjoyment will consist rather in the objective apprehension of these Ideas that are the most distinct revelations of will. For these exhibit the greatest variety of forms, a wealth and deep significance of phenomena; they reveal to us most completely the essence of will, whether in its violence, its terribleness, its satisfaction or its being broken (this last in tragic situations), finally even in its change or self-surrender, which is the particular theme of Christian painting. (212-213)

As we ascend, the significance of the object will more and more absorb our attention.

We can thus contrast two poles of the aesthetic experience. It is this distinction that furnishes Schopenhauer with the key to his classification of the arts, both by subject matter and by the quality of the experience.

Most attempts to classify the arts end up by doing violence to what is to be classified. I would, e.g. argue, that a painter like Mondrian offers us works that fit what Schopenhauer has to say about architecture much better than much architecture. I shall return to this point. But more interesting than the actual classification is perhaps the principle governing that classification. Let us examine it more carefully:

Particularly suggestive seems to me what Schopenhauer has to say about the subjective pole. The aesthetic object appears here as the occasion of a pure will-less knowing. This understanding of the aesthetic object is close to Kant's understanding of the beautiful as object of an entirely disinterested satisfaction. I want to speak in both cases of an **aesthetic conception of the beautiful**. What matters according to such a conception is first of all the quality of the occasioned experience, where the word "**aesthetic**" can be given a broad and a narrow sense: the broad sense leaves the quality of the feeling open, where the aesthetic would include the beautiful, the sublime, the interesting, and the characteristic, while the narrow sense speaks with Kant of a disinterested satisfaction and the focus is on beauty.

We can contrast this aesthetic conception with an **ontological conception**. On that conception the work of art is understood first of all as revelation of the truly real, however that is to be understood. The Platonic understanding of the beautiful as an epiphany of the form would be an example. Schopenhauer combines the aesthetic and the ontological approach: he advances an aesthetic conception when he emphasizes with Kant the disinterested character of the aesthetic experience; he represents the ontological approach when he understands the aesthetic object as the revelation of the Platonic idea. The work of art reveals the essence of reality. What joins the two is the conviction that freedom from the self-centered will, from the *principium individuationis*, and that means for Schopenhauer also from the principle of sufficient reason, makes visible the essence of reality in way denied to us as long as we remain caught up in it.



In this connection it is interesting, if not unexpected, to find that Schopenhauer repeats Aristotle's point that poetry is more philosophical than history:

Yet that which is significant in itself, not in the relation, namely the real unfolding of the Idea, is found to be far more accurate and clear in poetry than in history; therefore, paradoxical as it may sound, far more real, genuine, inner truth is to be attributed to poetry than to history. For the historian should accurately follow the individual event according to life, as this event is developed in time in the manifold tortuous and complicated chains of reasons or grounds and consequents. But he cannot possibly possess all the data for this; he cannot have seen all and ascertained everything. At every moment he is forsaken by the original of his picture, or a false picture is substituted for it; and this happens so frequently, that I think I can assume that in all history the false outweighs the true. (245)

The aesthetic conception, if Schopenhauer is right, is most appropriate in the case of architecture, least appropriate in the case of poetry, especially tragedy. It is not surprising therefore that defenders of the aesthetic approach will so often draw on examples from architecture and painting.

## 2

Is it necessary to join the two as Schopenhauer does, to accept both the objective and the subjective characterization of the aesthetic object? I would suggest that most of us will have less difficulty with Schopenhauer's discussion of the aesthetic character of the art work than with his talk about Platonic Ideas. Let me return then to the aesthetic conception of the art-work as occasioning a calm, objective state of mind. Schopenhauer's example is the Dutch still life, which Hegel, too, was to celebrate.

Inward disposition, predominance of knowing over willing, can bring about this state in any environment. This is shown by those admirable Dutchmen who directed such purely objective perception to the most insignificant objects, and set up a lasting monument of their objectivity and spiritual peace in paintings of still life. The aesthetic beholder does not contemplate this without emotion; for it graphically

describes to him the calm, tranquil, will-free frame of mind which was necessary for contemplating such insignificant things so objectively, considering them so attentively, and repeating this perception with such thought. Since the picture invites the beholder to participate in this state, his emotion is often enhanced by the contrast between it and his own restless state of mind, disturbed by vehement willing, in which he happens to be. In the same spirit landscape painters, especially Ruysdael, have often painted extremely insignificant landscape objects, and have thus produced the same effect even more delightfully. (197)<sup>7</sup>

(Cf. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*; on Chardin) Note that a painting on this view should not move us to inquire into its meaning. To ask what it means or represents is to ask the wrong sort of question. The object presented to us is insignificant, just because of this we are not interested in what it is, but let its presence to fill our mind. (Cf. my *The Broken Frame*). At one extreme of the polarity I sketched stands thus the view of art as an epiphany of presence. That is the objective counterpart to a completely dispassionate, disinterested awareness.

To illustrate this point let me read you a remark that the painter Frank Stella made in an interview with Bruce Glaser:

I always get into arguments with people who want to retain the old values in painting, the humanistic values that they always find on the canvas. If you pin them down, they always end up asserting that there is something there besides the paint on the canvas. My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen is there. It really is an object. Any painting is an object and anyone who gets involved enough in this finally has to face up to the objectness of whatever he's doing. He is making a thing. All that should be taken for granted. If the painting were lean enough, accurate enough, or right enough, you would just be able to look at it. All I want anyone to get out of my paintings, and all that I ever get out of them, is the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Michael Fried's discussion of Chardin in *Absorption and Theatricality*.

fact that you can see the whole idea without confusion.... What you see is what you see.<sup>8</sup>

Distancing himself from what he calls the "humanistic" values of a more traditional approach to painting, Stella projects the ideal of an art that would allow us just to look at it, which would reduce the observer to a pure eye, the painting to a pure visual presence. Note how Stella insists on the object character of the painting. Here there would seem to be an obvious difference between him and Schopenhauer who sticks, at least as far as painting is concerned, to representation. Architecture is understood by him as a non-representational art, where it is interesting to note that Schopenhauer's remarks on architecture often throw more light on modern painting than do his remarks on painting. That this should be so is hardly surprising.

Let me now turn to the question: to what extent can we still take seriously Schopenhauer's ontological understanding of the aesthetic object?

### 3

Schopenhauer would not have accepted the reduction of the work of art to an epiphany of presence. No matter how low a grade of objectification we are dealing with, there is always, if only a minimal, revelation of the essence of the will and the tension that is inherent in it. Schopenhauer would be closer to Mondrian than to Stella.

Now if we consider *architecture* merely as a fine art and apart from its provision for useful purposes, in which it serves the will and not pure knowledge, and thus is no longer art in our sense, we can assign to it no purpose other than that of bringing to clearer perceptiveness some of those Ideas that are the lowest grades of the will's objectivity. Such Ideas are gravity, cohesion, rigidity, hardness, those universal qualities of stone, those first, simplest, and dullest visibilities of the will, the fundamental bass-notes of nature; and along with these light, which is in many respects their opposite. Even at this low stage of the will's objectivity, we see its

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<sup>8</sup> "Questions to Stella and Judd," Interview with Bruce Glaser, edited by Lucy R. Lippard, *Minimal Art. A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: Dutton, 1968), pp. 157 - 158.

inner nature revealing itself in discord; for, properly speaking, the conflict between gravity and rigidity is the sole aesthetic material of architecture; its problem is to make this conflict appear with perfect distinctness in many different ways. (214)

Schopenhauer located the very essence of architecture in the conflict of verticals and horizontals:

its sole and constant theme is *support and load*. Its fundamental law is that no load may be without sufficient support, and no support without a suitable load; consequently, that the relation of these two may be the exactly appropriate one. The purest execution of this theme is column and entablature; hence the order of columns has become, so to speak, the thorough-bass of the whole of architecture. In column and entablature, support and load are *completely separated*; and in this way the reciprocal effect of the two and their relation to each other becomes apparent. For even every plain and simple wall certainly contains support and load, but there the two are still amalgamated. (II, 411)

Once again the Greek temple is held up as paradigm of architectural purity and once again it is easy to criticize this view by showing how very much in keeping it is with the taste and conventions of the day. Schopenhauer was a conservative, and not just in politics. He had little patience with the then growing vogue in favor of Gothic architecture. To be sure, he was well aware of how Gothic architecture might be justified along the lines he has sketched:

Our pleasure in Gothic works certainly rests for the most part on the association of ideas and historical reminiscences, and hence on a feeling foreign to art. All that I have said of the really aesthetic aim, about the meaning and theme of architecture, loses its validity in the case of these works. (II, 417)

But, Schopenhauer insists, before admitting Gothic architecture as an equally valid paradigm, we should remind ourselves that "the conflict between rigidity and gravity, so openly and naively displayed by ancient architecture, is an actual and true one established by nature. On the other hand, the entire subjugation of gravity by rigidity remains a mere

pretense, a fiction testified by illusion." (II, 417 - 418) Schopenhauer knew that such "pretense" was able to communicate to countless believers a sense of eternal security, of safety from the vicissitudes of the temporal and earthbound: "Death, where is thy sting?" Gothic verticality seemed to shout. But Schopenhauer is unable to take seriously the vertical's apparent victory over the horizontal in Gothic architecture.

Now when I see how this unbelieving age so diligently finishes the Gothic churches left uncompleted by the believing Middle Ages, it seems to me as if it were desired to embalm a Christianity that has expired. (II, 418)

Despite all self-assertion, human beings are vulnerable and mortal, and full self-affirmation requires the recognition of the limits set to our self-assertion. Gothic architecture is governed by what Schopenhauer rejects as a false ethos. He would have architecture be more open to the tragic condition of human being, figured by the contrast between the heaviness of entablatures and the assertiveness of supporting columns, between verticals and horizontals, by the Greek temple. After the Greeks architecture knows no genuine development. On this point Schopenhauer agrees with Hegel.

But one could also emphasize the way Schopenhauer points ahead to modern art and architecture. Consider Piet Mondrian's insistence that:

The laws which in the culture of art have become more and more determinate are the great hidden laws of nature, which art establishes in its own fashion. It is necessary to stress the fact that these laws are more or less hidden from the superficial aspect of nature...

First and foremost there is the fundamental law of dynamic equilibrium. The first aim in painting should be universal expression. What is needed in a picture to realize this is an equivalence of vertical and horizontal expressions. This I feel today I did not accomplish in such early works as my 1911 "Tree" paintings. In those the vertical emphasis predominated. A "gothic" expression was the result.<sup>9</sup>

No doubt, some may prefer the "gothic" look of the tree paintings to the cooler "classical" look of a mature Mondrian. I am less interested here in such disagreement than in what it

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<sup>9</sup> Piet Mondrian, "Statement, ca. 1943," *Theories of Modern Art*, ed. Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 362.

presupposes: an understanding of the language of verticals and horizontals. Only when this language is understood, does it make sense to be concerned about "an equivalence of vertical and horizontal expressions" or about attempts to have one triumph over the other.

Note in this connection also Schopenhauer's suspicion of ornament:

Ornamental work on capitals, etc., belongs to sculpture and not to architecture, and is merely tolerated as an additional embellishment, which might be dispensed with. (215)

Schopenhauer does not yet tie ornament to crime, as Adolf Loos was going to do. For him it is the inessential, easily dispensed with.

Similarly Schopenhauer pleads for a certain honesty, where the contrast with the architecture of the rococo is obvious.

From what has been said, it is absolutely necessary for an understanding and aesthetic enjoyment of a work of architecture to have direct knowledge through perception of its matter as regards its weight, rigidity, and cohesion. Our pleasure in such a work would suddenly be greatly diminished by the disclosure that the building material used was pumice-stone, for then it would strike us as a kind of sham building. We should be affected in almost the same way if we were told that it was only of wood, when we had assumed it to be stone, just because this alters and shifts the relation between rigidity and gravity, and thus the significance and necessity of all the parts; for those natural forces reveal themselves much more feebly in a wooden building. Therefore, no architectural work as fine art can really be made of timber, however many forms this may assume; this can be explained simply and solely by our theory. If we were told clearly that the building, the sight of which pleased us, consisted of entirely different kinds materials of very unequal weight and consistency, but not distinguishable by the eye, the whole building would become as incapable of affording us pleasure as would a poem in an unknown language. (215)

Schopenhauer also strikes us as modern in his insistence on function and simplicity of form. He speaks of the beauty of ancient earthenware which he contrasts with the

artificiality of much recent work:

On the other hand, it is just that naive simplicity in the presentation and attainment of the end in view, corresponding to the spirit in which nature creates and fashions, which imparts to ancient earthenware vessels such beauty and grace of form that we are always astonished at them afresh. This is because it contrasts so nobly in original taste with our modern vessels which bear the stamp of vulgarity, it matters not whether they are formed from porcelain or from coarse potter's clay. When looking at the vessels and implements of the ancients we feel that, if nature had wanted to produce such things, she would have done so in these forms. Therefore, as we see that the beauty of architecture arises from the undisguised presentation of the ends, and from their attainment in the shortest and most natural way, my theory here comes into direct contradiction with Kant's. His theory places the essence of everything beautiful beauty in an apparent appropriateness without purpose. (II, 416)

Function in Schopenhauer goes along with beauty.

And yet in the first edition there seems to be more of a tension between function and beauty; here he appears closer to Kant:

Unlike the works of the other fine arts, those of architecture are very rarely executed for purely aesthetic purposes. On the contrary, they are subordinated to other, practical ends that are foreign to art itself. Thus the great merit of the architect consists in his achieving and attaining purely aesthetic ends, in spite of their subordination to other ends foreign to them. This he does by skillfully adapting them in many different ways to the arbitrary ends in each case, and by correctly judging what aesthetically architectural beauty is consistent and compatible with a temple, a palace, a prison, and so on. The more a harsh climate increases those demands of necessity and utility, definitely determines them, and inevitably prescribes them, the less scope is there for the beautiful in architecture. In the mild climate of India, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, where the demands of necessity were fewer and less definite, architecture

was able to pursue its aesthetic ends with the greatest freedom. Under a northern sky these are greatly curtailed for architecture here, where the requirements were coffered, pointed roofs, and towers, it could unfold its beauty only within very narrow limits, and had to make amends all the more by making use of embellishments borrowed from sculpture, as can be seen in Gothic architecture. (217)

And yet it is not at all surprising that Schopenhauer should arrive in the second volume at a formulation that seems to recognize little tension between function and form. For if architecture is to be beautiful it has to do justice to the essence of matter, i.e. it has to find itself in a pre-established harmony with the demands of engineering.

## 4

I shall have little to say about Schopenhauer's discussion of the other arts. A point to which I would however like to call attention is his attack on allegory in the visual arts, while allegory is given an important place in poetry. When Schopenhauer is attacking allegory in the visual arts, he is thinking of the art of the Baroque, but also of Winckelmann, who in this respect seems quite indebted to the Baroque:

This opinion of allegory, based on our consideration of the inner nature of art and quite consistent with it, is directly opposed to Winckelmann's view. Far from explaining allegory, as we do, as something quite foreign to the aim of art and often interfering with it, he speaks everywhere in favor of it; indeed (*Works*, Vol. i. pp. 55 seq.) he places art's highest aim of art in the "presentation of universal concepts, and non-sensuous things." It is left to everyone to assent either to one view or to the other. (239)

Let me quote Winckelmann:

Painting reaches to things that are not sensible; these are its highest goal... The painter who thinks further than his palette reaches, desires a storehouse of learning from which he can take significant and sensible signs for things that are themselves not sensible. The brush the artist holds



should be steeped in understanding... He should leave more to thought than to the eye. (*Gedanken über die Nachahmung*)

With this emphasis on abstract ideas the aesthetics of classicism tended to blur the distinction between artist and philosopher. A mechanical part was distinguished from the ideal part of art. The former requires a skill that can be taught, the latter requires talent, the talent of the philosopher. The difficulty with this view of art is that it tends to render art an at bottom superfluous parergon. Art becomes concept art. And here it is interesting to consider the affinity between today's concept art and the aesthetics of classicism.

But if art is not permitted to be allegorical, to what extent is it permitted to have meaning at all? If we mean by meaning something that can be detached from the work of art and put into words that do full justice to it, then, I take it, it should have no meaning. The point of the work of art is not to mean, but to be. Once again we return to the idea of the art-work as an epiphany of presence.

Note, however, that Schopenhauer does not attack on allegory in poetry. Quite the opposite:

But allegory has an entirely different relation to *poetry* from that which it has to plastic and pictorial art; and although it is objectionable in the latter, it is quite admissible and very effective in the former. For in plastic and pictorial art allegory leads away from what is given in perception, from the real object of all art, to abstract thoughts; but in poetry the relation is reversed. Here the concept is what is directly given in words, and the first aim is to lead from this to the perceptive, the depiction of which must be undertaken by the imagination of the hearer.  
(240)

Allegory here serves to incarnate the word; it represents a turn from an overly developed rationality to perception. And it is indeed in literature that Schopenhauer sees the peculiarly modern art and he does not hesitate to place Shakespeare above the Greeks tragedians. Schopenhauer thus places art between two extremes: one represented by architecture, the other by tragedy.

## 5

I have not said anything about music, and yet it is music that is perhaps most often mentioned when there is talk of Schopenhauer's aesthetics. Music, on Schopenhauer's view, is different from all the other arts. It alone finds no place in the hierarchy I have sketched:

It stands quite apart off from all the others. In it we do not recognize the copy, the repetition, of any Idea of the inner nature the world. Yet it is such a great and exceedingly fine art, its effect on man's innermost nature of is so powerful, and it is so completely and profoundly understood by him in his innermost being as an entirely universal language, whose distinctness surpasses even that of the world of perception itself, that in it we certainly have to look for more than that *exercitium arithmeticae occultum nescientis se numerare animi*, which Leibnitz took it to be. Yet he was perfectly right, in so far as he considered only its immediate and outward significance, its exterior. (256)

Leibniz's definition is thus thought to be not altogether wrong. There is indeed a peculiar tie between music and mathematics. We could go back to Pythagoras. But there has always been a rival account: music as the language of the emotions. In Plato we find thus the distinction between the music of Apollo and the music of Marsyas. Music possesses an Apollinian and a Dionysian side. Schopenhauer recognizes both, although the second is to him by far the more significant.

But if it were nothing more, the satisfaction afforded by it would inevitably be similar to that which we feel when a sum in arithmetic comes out right, and could not be that profound pleasure with which we see the deepest recesses of our nature find expression. Therefore, from our stand point, where the aesthetic effect is the thing we have in mind, we must attribute to music a far more serious and profound significance that refers to the innermost being of the world and of our own self. In this regard the numerical ratios, into which it can be resolved, are related not as the thing signified, but only as the sign. (256)

The mathematical view gets only at the surface; the Dionysian at its real character.

Note that music refers at one and the same time to the innermost being of the world and of our own self. This of course is to be expected: the essence of both is the same: will. Music is thus understood by Schopenhauer as a copy of the will itself, not of the will as mediated by the Platonic ideas.

Therefore music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but *a copy of the will itself*, the objectivity of which are the Ideas. For this reason the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence. However, as it is the same will that objectifies itself both in the ideas and in music, though in a quite different way in each, there must be, not indeed an absolutely direct likeness, but yet a parallel, an analogy, between music and the Ideas, the phenomenon of which in plurality and in incompleteness is the visible world. (257-258)

Schopenhauer belongs thus with those who understand music as the language of the emotions, but our emotions reach down to the heart of the world, to the will:

Now the nature of man consists in the fact that his will strives, is satisfied, strives anew, and so on and on; in fact his happiness and well-being consist only in the transition from desire to satisfaction, and from this to a fresh desire. For the non-appearance of satisfaction is suffering; the empty longing for a new desire is languor, boredom. Thus, corresponding to this, the nature of melody is a constant digression and deviation from the key-note in a thousand ways, not only to the harmonious intervals, the third and dominant, but to every tone, to the dissonant seventh, and to the extreme intervals; yet there always follows a final return to the keynote. In all these ways, melody expresses the many different forms of the will's efforts, but also its satisfaction by ultimately finding again a harmonious interval, and still more the keynote. The invention of melody, the disclosure in it of all the deepest secrets of human willing and feeling, is the work of genius, whose effect is more apparent here than anywhere else, is far from all reflection and conscious intention, and may be called an inspiration (260)

Beethoven is the paradigmatic genius.

Schopenhauer goes on to develop this, although he is aware that, given his claim that music gives direct expression to the will, words must finally fail us in the attempt to explain it.

I recognize, however, that it is essentially impossible to demonstrate this explanation, for it assumes and establishes a relation of music as a representation to that which of its essence can never be representation, and claims to regard music as the copy of an original that can itself never be directly represented. Therefore, I can do no more than state here at the end of this third book, devoted mainly to the consideration of the arts, this explanation of the wonderful art of tones which is sufficient for me. I must leave the acceptance or denial of my view to the effect that both music and the whole thought communicated in this work have on each reader. Moreover, I regard it as necessary, in order that a man may assent with genuine conviction to the exposition of the significance of music here to be given, that he should often listen to music with constant reflection on this; and this again requires that he should be already very familiar with the whole thought which I expound. (257)

Despite this warning, Schopenhauer does not hesitate to tell us quite a bit. Consider this passage, which Schoenberg quoted with approval, although he accused Schopenhauer of trying to say too much, more than his own view really allowed him to say. One could also point to Wagner and Nietzsche in this connection:

Here, as everywhere in art, the conception is unproductive. The composer reveals the innermost nature of the world, and expresses the profoundest wisdom in a language that his reasoning faculty does not understand, just as a magnetic somnambulist gives information about things of which she has no conception when she is awake. (260)

The phrase magnetic somnambulist refers to the then much talked about and highly controversial Franz Anton Mesmer, who practiced medicine in Vienna and later in Paris, attempting to apply his theory of “animal magnetism.”

Despite his warning that music transcends the reach of concepts, Schopenhauer offers us quite a number of analogies:

The short, intelligible phrases of rapid dance-music seem to speak only of ordinary happiness which is easy of attainment. On the other hand, the *allegro maestoso* in great phrases, long passages, and wide deviations, expresses a greater, nobler effort towards a more distant end, and its final attainment. (260-261)

The *adagio* in the minor key reaches the expression of the keenest pain, and becomes the most convulsive lament. (261)

Allegro in the minor is as if a man danced in a shoe that pinched him. Music according to Schopenhauer does not express a particular pleasure or emotion, not this or that grief, pain, calm, love, but their essential nature: The essential nature of our emotive life is thus revealed to us by music, freed of particularities.

From this follows an attack on program music. What Schopenhauer is thinking of here are e.g., passages from Haydn's creation where particular phenomena of the world are imitated. Battle pieces are included.

Just because music expresses the essential nature of the emotions we are easily led to try to express what music says to us by finding images suggesting particular emotions. We may thus feel that music addresses what we are feeling just now. And in a sense we are of course right. This explains why the same melody is so easily set to very different words.

From Schopenhauer's aesthetics of music it follows that instrumental music is best able to do justice to the essence of music. Opera and song threaten that essence if the word is being taken too seriously. Music can never be a mere means of expressing what the song says. To think this would be to overlook the essentially different character of the two arts. And yet, by being set to music, even an undistinguished text may acquire what seems an infinite significance. Think of the *Magic Flute* or of a Schubert song cycle such as the *Winterreise*.

From this characterization of music as a revelation of the essential life of the self, Schopenhauer is quite naturally led to the view that music reveals the essence of the will, for we cannot finally distinguish the will within us and the will itself.

If music is indeed a direct expression of the will then it follows that music and the world must be analogous. And that deep analogy between the essence of music and the essence of the world does not depend in any way on an attempt by the composer to take anything from the world. Quite the opposite. Music is thus according to Schopenhauer the most metaphysical art. Playfully he thus transforms Leibniz's statement about the mathematical character of music

Consequently, we can parody in the following way the above-mentioned saying of Leibniz, in the sense of our higher view of music, for it is quite correct from a lower point of view: *Musica est exercitium metaphysices occultum nescientis se philosophari animi.* For *scire*, to know, always means to have couched in abstract concepts. But further, in virtue of the truth of the saying of Leibniz, corroborated in many ways, music, apart from its aesthetic or inner significance, and considered merely externally and purely empirically, is nothing but the means of grasping, immediately and in the concrete, larger numbers and more complex numerical ratios that we can otherwise know only indirectly by comprehension in concepts.  
(264)

It follows that just as the different Platonic ideas are revelations of the will, that the scientist grasps “merely externally and purely empirically” by means of “larger numbers and more complex numerical ratios,” so the different arts, corresponding to the ideas, have to carry music buried within themselves. And the less we are interested in the particular idea expressed, the more strongly the musical character will assert itself. It is interesting to note that Schoenberg in his contribution to the *Blaue Reiter Almanach* sees in Kandinsky's and Marc's movement towards abstraction a realization of the musical essence of all art.

This celebration of music should be compared with the rather low opinion Kant had of it. Kant never could quite make up his mind whether music really deserved to be called an art at all. At times it seemed to him to offer not a truly aesthetic, but a merely sensuous pleasure, in this respect more like cooking than like poetry. But Kant was aware of the deficiency of his understanding of music and did not push the point too far.

Given what was just said, I wonder whether we do not have to question Schopenhauer's rejection of Goethe's suggestion that architecture is frozen music.

We therefore see the piece of music combined and rounded off as a whole by symmetrical distribution and repeated division, down to the beats and their fractions with general subordination, superordination, and coordination of its members, exactly as a building is by its symmetry; only that what with the latter is exclusively in space is with the former exclusively in time. The mere feeling of this analogy has occasioned the bold witticism, often repeated in the last thirty years, that architecture is frozen music. The origin of this can be traced to Goethe, for, according to Eckermann's *Conversations*, Vol. II. p. 88, he said: "Among my papers I have found a sheet on which I call architecture a congealed music; and actually there is something in it; the mood arising from architecture approximates to the effect of music." He probably uttered that witticism much earlier in conversation, and in that case we know quite well that there was never a lack of people to glean what he dropped, in order to go about subsequently dressed up in it. For the rest, whatever Goethe may have said, the analogy of music with architecture, which I refer to its sole ground, namely the analogy of rhythm with symmetry, accordingly extends only to the outer form, and by no means to the inner nature of the two arts, which is vastly different. Indeed, it would be ridiculous to try to put the most limited and the feeble of all the arts on an equal footing in essential respects with the most extensive and effective. As an amplification of the analogy pointed out it might also be added that when music, in a sudden urge for independence, so to speak, seizes the opportunity of a pause, in order to free itself from the control of rhythm, to launch out into the free fancy of an ornate cadenza, such a piece of music, divested of rhythm is analogous to the ruin divested of symmetry. Accordingly, in the daring language of the witticism, such a ruin may be called, a frozen cadenza. (II, 453)

I find this a highly suggestive comment that I take far more seriously than does Schopenhauer. I would use it to question the sharp separation of architecture and music that Schopenhauer, relying on Lessing's distinction between arts of space and arts of time, appears to insist on.

Not that Schopenhauer's comment here is surprising: it follows quite naturally from his view that architecture, as an expression of the lowest form of the will's objectification, must lack the range of music. But here one has to ask whether Schopenhauer is not limited by an overly narrow view of architecture. The comparison between eighteenth century Rococo churches, say by Balthasar Neumann, and the music of Bach has often been made. Are such comparisons more than clever play? Or do they point to something essential? If one wanted to, it would not be difficult to find in such architecture degrees that correspond to the Platonic ideas. That aspect of architecture Schopenhauer discusses could be compared to what he has to say about the ground-bass of nature.

I recognize in the deepest tones of harmony, in the ground-bass, the lowest grades of the will's objectification, inorganic nature, the mass of the planet. It is well known that all the high notes, light, tremulous, and dying away more rapidly, may be regarded as resulting from the simultaneous vibrations of the deep bass-note. With the sounding of the low note, the high notes always sound faintly at the same time, and it is a law of harmony that a bass-note may be accompanied only by those high notes that actually sound automatically and simultaneously with it (*its sons harmoniques*) through its accompanying vibrations. (258)

One could discuss analogous terms the movement in some Baroque church from architecture to ornament, to fresco, to sculpture. But one should take care here not to leap too quickly to analogies more suggestive than worthy of being taken seriously. Still, they do seem to me to point to something essential: Many works of architecture do seem to me to show a range and differentiation comparable to what Schopenhauer finds in music. Goethe's term "frozen music" therefore does not seem inappropriate and similarly architectural metaphors have suggested themselves for music.



One specific point, already mentioned and quite characteristic of aesthetic discussions of the time, is that Schopenhauer, following Lessing, distinguishes architecture as an art essentially tied to space from music as an art essentially tied to time. But how convincing is this distinction? Is music exclusively an art in time, architecture exclusively in space? Why do we speak of high and low notes, employing a spatial metaphor? And can we not speak of architectural counterpoint? But I shall leave this as a problem.

And what about architecture? Is our experience of architecture not inseparably bound up with time? Think of the moving body's role in such experience. Or of the function of moving light. There is architecture that functions as a sun dial, marking the passage of time. Although there is something seemingly inevitable about the division of the arts into arts of time and arts of space, nevertheless the distinction seems to me much more questionable than Lessing's *Laocoon* might lead one to believe.

## 6

But the details of Schopenhauer's discussion of the arts, interesting as they often are, matter little in this context. What does matter is that he finds in the aesthetic experience a first escape from that suffering that is our lot as long as we remain submerged in the will, a fleeting redemption. The difficulty with art is that this redemption is so fleeting. Art does not deliver us from time forever, but only for a time, perhaps just a few moments. It is this inability of the aesthetic sphere to sustain its magic that finally makes it incapable of solving the problem of life. An account of what is proposed as true redemption is offered only in the fourth book.

## 10. Death and Recurrence

### 1

Let me begin with a quote from Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*

The brute fact of death denies once and for all the reality of a non-repressive existence. For death is the final negativity of time, but 'joy wants eternity.' Timelessness is the ideal of pleasure. Time has no power over the id, the original domain of the pleasure principle. But the ego, through which alone pleasure becomes real, is in its entirety subject to time. The mere anticipation of the inevitable end, present in every instant, introduces a repressive element into all libidinal relations and renders pleasure itself painful. This primary frustration in the instinctual structure of man becomes the inexhaustible source of all other frustrations — and of their social effectiveness. Man learns that "it cannot last anyway," that every pleasure is short, that for all finite beings the hour of their birth is the hour of their death — that it couldn't be otherwise. (23)

This reflection centers on the thought that what we most deeply want and an understanding of time that subordinates the present to the future are incompatible. As I have pointed out, essentially the same thought is central to Schopenhauer's pessimism. "Joy wants eternity." True satisfaction is held incompatible with our temporal condition. We are satisfied when we are entire, complete, at one with ourselves, in the present. The aesthetic experience grants us something like such satisfaction, if only for a time and at the price of what we usually consider reality. Are we not denied satisfaction or completeness by our temporality? Desire, care, anticipation: they all betray a lack that appears to be inseparable from human existence. Schopenhauer sees dissatisfaction as part of the essence of the will. It therefore shows itself in all its phenomena. Suffering and pain are not the privilege of the human being, who is however unique by virtue of his reason; as the reasonable animal the human being is concerned for his being and therefore also about the possible lack of being, i.e. his death.

Man alone carries about with him, in abstract conceptions, the certainty of his death, (281)

Philosophy and religion, Schopenhauer suggests, are responses to this dread:

The animal lives without any real knowledge of death; therefore the individual animal immediately enjoys the absolute imperishableness and immortality of the species, since it is conscious of itself only as endless. With man the terrifying certainty of death necessarily appeared along with the faculty of reason. But just as everywhere in nature a remedy, or at least some compensation, is given for every evil, so the same reflection that introduced the knowledge of death also assists us in obtaining *metaphysical* points of view. Such views console us concerning death, and the animal is neither in need of nor capable of them. All religions and philosophical systems are directed principally to this end, and are thus primarily the antidote to the certainty of death which reflective reason produces from its own resources. (II, 463)

And yet, Schopenhauer points out, given this certainty, most of us are surprisingly undisturbed by our inevitable death. Our living is not a being unto death:

yet this can frighten him only very rarely and at particular moments, when some occasion calls it up to the imagination. Against the mighty voice of nature reflection can do little. In man, as in the animal that does not think, there prevails as a lasting state of mind the certainty, springing from innermost consciousness, that he is nature, the world itself. By virtue of this, no one is noticeably disturbed by the thought of certain and never-distant death, but everyone lives on as though he is bound to live forever. (281)

Most of the time we do not spend very much time thinking about death. Is this because, as Heidegger suggests, that most of the time we hide from ourselves our own essential being, because we find death too dreadful to bear? This would make such existence inauthentic. Or does something else announce itself here, an unarticulated knowledge that death does not deserve to be taken all that seriously?

What is it that makes death so terrifying? Is it that life is so pleasant?

Schopenhauer could hardly find this a convincing answer. Death has indeed often been thought of as a release. Is it then simply the thought of our non-existence that fills us

with dread? But were this the case the time before we were born would harbor as much dread as thoughts of the time when we shall be no longer.

If what makes death seem so terrible to us were the thought of *non-existence*, we should necessarily think with equal horror of the time when as yet we did not exist. For it is irrefutably certain that non-existence after death cannot be different from non-existence before infinity ran its course when we did *not yet* exist, but this in no way disturbs us. On the other hand, we find it hard, and even unendurable, that after the momentary intermezzo of an ephemeral existence, a second infinity should follow in which we shall exist no longer. (II, 466)

Why this dissimilarity between past and future non-existence? Is it because death is a particularly painful experience? Again the answer must be no: death is not experienced at all. As Epicurus put it, when we are death is not, and when death is we are not. How then are we to understand the fear of death? That fear is not supported by any reason:

The fear of death is, in fact, independent of all knowledge, for the animal has it, although it does not know death. Everything that is born already brings this fear into the world. Such fear of death, however, is *a priori* only the reverse side of the will-to-live, which indeed we all are. Therefore in every animal the fear of its own destruction, like the care for its maintenance, is inborn. Thus it is this fear of death, and not the mere avoidance of pain, that shows itself in the anxious care and caution with which the animal seeks to protect itself, and still more its brood, from everyone who might become dangerous. (II, 465)

The fear of death has no rational ground, but is just the other side of the will to live. Thus it could be said to be inseparable from the essence of the human being.

This will-to-live is certainly not informed by a prior judgment that life is worth living. We just want to live. We have not chosen to adopt this stance. It simply describes our being. Schopenhauer finds in the fear of death confirmation of his thesis that the human being is first of all a willing and not a knowing being.

And yet, what are we to make of the fact that we do not usually worry all that much about death? What kind of a culture would be most obsessed with and find it most difficult to accept death? I suspect that it would have to be one where the individual understands himself as his own end, as sufficient unto himself instead of as part of a larger order. If the human being on the other hand understands himself as part of something ongoing and larger that endures even when he is no longer, then his death will become more acceptable, even something one might choose for the sake of the larger whole. In the second volume Schopenhauer thus calls attention to the example of a Frenchman, whose son had received a draft notice, and who committed suicide so that his son would not be drafted. Sons of widows were exempt from the draft. We don't learn much about the details. Perhaps the father was ill and could not take care of the farm on which the family's continued welfare depended. How are we to understand such self-sacrifice? It makes sense only if the peasant understands himself as part of larger order. What shows itself here is, according to Schopenhauer, something that links human beings to animals:

Since, however, animals are incapable of any reflection, the instinctive maternal affection in their case (the male is generally not conscious of his paternity) shows itself directly and genuinely, and hence with perfect distinctness and in all its strength. At bottom it is the expression of the consciousness in the animal that its true inner being lies more immediately in the species than in the individual. Therefore, in case of necessity, the animal sacrifices its own life, so that the species may be maintained in the young. Here, therefore, as well as in the sexual impulse, the will-to-live becomes to a certain extent transcendent, since its consciousness extends beyond the individual, in which it is inherent, to the species. (II, 515)

One should see here a connection between this and the Biblical account, which makes death the punishment of pride. For what is pride? It is the desire to be like God, to be self-sufficient. But the human being is not like God, even if he often aspires to godlike status. And nowhere does this fact that we are not God show itself more completely than in the certainty that we must die. In this sense St. Augustine can emphasize that death is a fitting punishment for pride. It is fitting because it offers a remedy for sin, a

recognition that we do not belong to ourselves but to God, that we are not sufficient to ourselves, but exist more fundamentally as parts. With Schopenhauer the recognition of being as a part expresses itself in a procreative eros: in sexual desire and in care for the young. A human being who remains caught up in pride, who sees the end of his life as satisfaction of his individual self, must end in despair:

Death is the great reprimand that the will-to-live, and more essentially the egoism essential thereto, receive through the course of nature; and it can be conceived as a punishment for our existence. Death is the painful untying of the knot that generation with sensual pleasure had tied; it is the violent destruction, bursting in from outside, of the fundamental error of our true nature, the great disillusionment. At bottom, we are something that ought not to be; therefore we cease to be. Egoism really consists in man's restricting all reality to his own person, in that he imagines that he lives in this alone, and not in others. Death teaches him something better, since it abolishes this person, so that man's true nature, that is his will, will henceforth live only in other individuals. (II, 507)

Given egoism, death must seem to undercut all meaning.

Can we give content to this phrase: the human being exists as a part? How does Schopenhauer conceive of this being as a part? We have already been given the answer:

For individual knowledge, on the other hand, and hence in time, the *Idea* exhibits itself under the form of the *species*, and this is the *Idea* drawn apart by entering into time. The *species* is therefore the most immediate objectification of the thing in itself, i.e., of the will-to-live. Accordingly, the innermost being of every animal, and of man also lies in the *species*; thus the will-to-live, which is so powerfully active, is rooted in the *species*, not really in the individual. On the other hand, immediate consciousness is to be found only in the individual; therefore it imagines itself to be different from the *species*, and therefore fears death. The will-to-live manifests itself in reference to the individual as hunger and the fear of death: in

reference to the species as sexual impulse and passionate care for the offspring. In agreement with this, we find nature, as being free from that delusion of the individual, just as careful for the maintenance of the species as she is indifferent to the destruction of the individuals; for her the latter are always only means, the former the end. (II, 484, 485)

This is in accord with that inversion of the traditional anthropology that I termed Schopenhauer's iceberg view of man. The individual is only the tip of the iceberg. But in many ways we behave not so much as individuals, but as members of the species. Schopenhauer points here especially to the sexual impulse, where that impulse, which Schopenhauer in no way affirms, but deplors as the strongest expression of the will, is tied to procreation and care for the resulting offspring. Sex, for Schopenhauer, is not first of all an instrument that we use to amuse ourselves and others. That would be a superficial view of sex, in keeping with a superficial view of the self as first of all an individual. It would be more correct to say the opposite: the individual is an instrument of sex. Schopenhauer understands the sexual impulse as the most complete manifestation of the will to live. This impulse, as Schopenhauer understands it, is intimately linked to the ability to sacrifice oneself. (Cf. *Symposium*, e.g., the reference to Alcestis) And in this respect the human being is more of an animal than he may like to think.

It is a view that we have to take seriously. We need not think here only of the care of children in which most of us overcome our natural egoism. In Plato's *Symposium*, where this is considered the lowest form of eros, Diotima speaks of spiritual children. The artist and the statesman also give birth, creating a community that endures through time and in this sense extends beyond the individual and his death.

## 2

Schopenhauer also offers a second metaphysical consideration designed to show that death is not really a threat to our essence, even if it does mean the end of the individual. Let us remember again that for Schopenhauer the human being is an objectification of the will. As individual he is phenomenon, subject to the principle of sufficient reason and thus to time. But as will, the human being also transcends time.

We, however, wish to consider life philosophically, that is to say, according to its Ideas, and then we shall find that neither the will, the thing-in-itself in all phenomena, nor the subject of knowing, the spectator of all phenomena, is in any way affected by birth and death. Birth and death belong only to the phenomenon of the will, and hence to life; and it is essential to this that it manifest itself in individuals that come into being and pass away, as fleeting phenomena, appearing in the form of time, of that which in itself knows no time, but must be manifested precisely in the way aforesaid in order to objectify its real nature. Birth and death belong equally to life, and hold the balance as mutual conditions of each other, or, if the expression is preferred, as poles of the whole phenomenon of life. The wisest of all mythologies, the Indian, expresses this by giving to the very god who symbolizes destruction, and death (just as Brahma, the most sinful and the lowest god of the Trimurti, symbolizes generation, origination, and Vishnu preservation), by giving, I say, to Shiva as an attribute not only the necklace of skulls, but also the lingam, that symbol of generation, which appears as the counterpart of death. In this way it is intimated that generation and death are essentially correlatives which reciprocally neutralize and eliminate each other. It was precisely the same sentiment that prompted the Greeks and Romans to adorn the costly sarcophagi, just as we still see them, with feasts, dances, marriages, hunts, fights between wild beasts, bacchanalia, that is with presentations of life's most powerful urge. (275-276)

Death is described by Schopenhauer as a sleep in which individuality is forgotten. Can the will ever die? Can it ever slip into the past? The will will always manifest itself in the present. In this sense past and future have no reality.

Above all, we must clearly recognize that the form of the phenomenon of the will, and hence the form of life or of reality, is really only the *present*, not the future or the past. Future and past are only in the concept, exist only in the connexion and continuity of knowledge insofar as this follows the principle of sufficient reason. No man has lived in the past, and none



will live in the future; the present alone is the form of all life, but it is also life's sure possession which can never be torn from it. The present always exists together with its content; both stand firm without wavering, like the rainbow on the waterfall. For life is sure and certain to the will, and the present is sure and certain to life. (278)

And yet, when we consider the order of phenomena things seem quite different:

Of course, if we think back to the thousands of years that have passed, to the millions of men and women who have lived in them, we ask, What were they? What has become of them? But, on the other hand, we need recall only the past of our own life and vividly renew its scenes in our imagination, and then ask again, What was all this? What has become of it? As it is with our life, so is it with the life of those millions. Or should we suppose that the past took on a new existence by its being sealed through death? Our own past, even the most recent, even the previous day, is only an empty dream of the imagination, and the past of all those millions is the same. What was? What is? The will, whose mirror is life and will-free knowledge beholding the will clearly in that mirror. He who has not yet recognized this, or will not recognize it, must add to the above questions as to the fate of past generations this question as well: Why precisely is he, the questioner, so lucky as to possess this precious, perishable, and only real present, while those hundreds of generations of men, even the heroes and sages of former times, have sunk into the night of the past, and have thus become nothing, while he, his insignificant ego, actually exists? Or more briefly, although strangely: Why is this now, his now, precisely now and was not long ago? Since he asks such strange questions, he regards his existence and his time as independent of each other, and the former as projected into the latter. He really assumes two nows, one belonging to the object and the other to the subject, and marvels at the happy accident of their coincidence. (278)

The reflection is interesting: To think in this manner we must have opposed ourselves to time.

The will cannot lose the present. Schopenhauer is not arguing here for a life before or after death. He points rather to a vertical dimension that connects the individual with the will. In his essence the human being transcends time for Schopenhauer no less than for Plato, only that for Schopenhauer the reinterpreted Kantian distinction between thing-in-itself and phenomenon has come to be of crucial importance. It is this transcendence that, according to him, expresses itself in the fact that we are not more upset about death. And yet this thought, as Schopenhauer insists, is no consolation for the egoist. Crucial here is the thought that egoism provides us with only a superficial understanding of human being.

From Schopenhauer's understanding of the will, refracted in the Platonic ideas, manifesting itself in endless phenomena, follows quite naturally a cyclical view. The Ideas reconstitute themselves. Thus Schopenhauer, despite passages that point towards the theory of evolution, cannot finally make sense of progress. There is no end towards which the cosmos is tending. Here he is closer to Aristotle than to evolutionary views:

The genuine symbol of nature is universally and everywhere the circle, because it is the schema or form of recurrence; in fact, this is, the most general form in nature. She carries it through in everything from the course of the constellations down to the death and birth of organic beings. In this way alone, in the restless stream of time and its content, a continued existence, i.e., a nature, becomes possible. (II, 477)

After these considerations, we now return to ourselves and our species; we then cast our glance forward far into the future, and try to picture to ourselves future generations with the millions of their individuals in the strange form of their customs and aspirations. But then we interpose with the question: Whence will all these come? Where are they now? Where is the abundant womb of that nothing which is pregnant with worlds, and which still conceals them, the coming generations? Would not the smiling and true answer to this be: Where else could they be but there where alone the real always was and will be, namely in the present and its content? — hence with you, the deluded questioner, who in this mistaking of his own nature is like the leaf on the tree. Fading in the autumn and about to fall,

this leaf grieves over its own extinction, and will not be consoled by looking forward to the fresh green which will clothe the tree in spring, but says as a lament, " I am not these! These are quite different leaves!" Oh, foolish leaf! Whither do you want to go? And whence are the others supposed to come? Where is the nothing, the abyss of which you fear? Know your own inner being, precisely that which is so filled with thirst for existence; recognize it once more in the inner, mysterious, sprouting force of the tree. This force is always one and the same in all the generations of leaves and it remains untouched by arising and passing away. "As the leaves on the tree, so are the generations of human beings." Whether the fly now buzzing round me goes to sleep in the evening and buzzes again the following morning, or whether it dies in the evening and in spring another fly buzzes which has emerged from its egg, this in itself is the same thing (II, 477)

The central idea of these passages has found beautiful expression in an opera by Leos Janacek: *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

Schopenhauer's thoughts here point in the direction of Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal recurrence. There is indeed a sense in which Schopenhauer may be said to have inscribed the possibility Nietzsche seized into his text.

Therefore, a philosophical knowledge of the nature of the world which has reached the point we are now considering, but went no farther, could even at this point of view, overcome the terrors of death according as reflection had power over direct feeling in the given individual. A man who had assimilated firmly into his way of thinking the truths so far advanced, but at the same time had not come to know, through his own experience or through a deeper insight, that constant suffering is essential to all life and took perfect delight in it; who desired, in spite of calm deliberation, that the course of his life as he had hitherto experienced it should be of endless duration or of constant recurrence; and whose courage to face life was so great, that in return for life's pleasures, he would willingly and gladly put up with all the hardships and miseries to which it is subject; such a man

would stand "with firm strong bones on the well-grounded, enduring earth,"(Goethe, *Grenzen der Menschheit*) and would have nothing to fear. Armed with the knowledge we confer on him, he would look with indifference at death hastening towards him on the wings of time. He would regard it as a false illusion, an impotent spectre, frightening to the weak but having no power over him who knows that he himself is that will of which the whole world is the objectification or copy, to which therefore life and also the present always remain certain and sure. The present is the only real form of the phenomenon of the will. Therefore no endless past or future will frighten him, for he regards these as an empty mirage and the web of Maya. Thus he would no more have to fear death than the sun would the night. In the "Bhagavad-Gita" Krishna puts his young pupil Arjuna in this position, when, seized with grief at the sight of the armies ready for battle (somewhat after the manner of Xerxes), Arjuna loses heart and wishes to give up the fight, to avert the destruction of so many thousands. Krishna brings him to this point of view, and the death of those thousands can no longer hold him back; he gives the sign for battle. This point of view is also expressed by Goethe's *Prometheus*, especially when he says:

Here sit I, form men  
 In my own imago,  
 A race that is like me,  
 To suffer, to weep,  
 To enjoy and to rejoice,  
 And to heed you not.  
 As I!

The philosophy of Bruno and that of Spinoza might also bring to this standpoint the person whose conviction was not shaken and weakened by their errors and imperfections. (283-284)

That Nietzsche was aware of this passage is suggested by the way he uses the same stanza in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Schopenhauer of course is convinced that suffering is essential to all life and that there is no higher meaning that might redeem it. Schopenhauer cannot find refuge in a yes to life that affirms death and battle. But it is interesting that at this stage of the argument he very much leaves this possibility open.

## 11. Satisfaction and Suffering

### 1

I suggested last time that there is a sense in which Schopenhauer may be said to have inscribed the possibility Nietzsche seized with his doctrine of the eternal recurrence into his text. Consider once more the following passage:

Therefore, a philosophical knowledge of the nature of the world which has reached the point we are now considering, but went no farther, could even at this point of view, overcome the terrors of death according as reflection had power over direct feeling in the given individual. A man who had assimilated firmly into his way of thinking the truths so far advanced, but at the same time had not come to know, through his own experience or through a deeper insight, that constant suffering is essential to all life and took perfect delight in it; who desired, in spite of calm deliberation, that the course of his life as he had hitherto experienced it should be of endless duration or of constant recurrence; and whose courage to face life was so great, that in return for life's pleasures, he would willingly and gladly put up with all the hardships and miseries to which it is subject; such a man would stand "with firm strong bones on the well-grounded, enduring earth," (Goethe, *Grenzen der Menschheit*) and would have nothing to fear. Armed with the knowledge we confer on him, he would look with indifference at death hastening towards him on the wings of time. (283-284)

That Nietzsche was aware of this precise passage is suggested by the fact that he cites in *The Birth of Tragedy* the very same stanza from Goethe's *Prometheus* that Schopenhauer uses to illustrate such a life-affirming stance. Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal recurrence may be said to presuppose the "viewpoint of the complete affirmation of the will-to-live."

Schopenhauer of course is convinced that suffering is essential to all life and that there is no higher meaning that might redeem it. He cannot find refuge in a yes to life

that affirms death and battle. But it is interesting that at this stage of the argument he very much leaves this possibility open.

Before going on, let me review the argument that leads Schopenhauer to thoughts of eternal recurrence:

1. Linear time is understood as a manifestation of the principle of sufficient reason, hence as applying only to phenomena and to the human being only in so far as he is phenomenon.

2. But the thinking subject is not another phenomenon and as such not subject to the rule of time. It is, as Wittgenstein puts it in the *Tractatus* a limit of the world. And if Schopenhauer is right, man knows himself also as thing in itself, as will.

3. Transcending phenomena, the thing-in-itself also transcends time. Our coming into being and passing out of existence must thus be seen as both, as events in the world of phenomena and as limiting events.

4. As limiting events they cannot be interpreted adequately just in phenomenal terms.

5. What understanding of time is then appropriate to an understanding of the human being as this bridge between phenomenon and thing in itself, time and eternity? Time and eternity have to be somehow thought together. At this point the metaphor of the eternal recurrence almost has to suggest itself, where finally this is only a linear metaphor for something better expressed by the image of the circle.

There are of course obvious challenges to this conclusion: for one, we may want to identify human being with his phenomenal being, deny Schopenhauer his claim that he can make sense of his understanding of the human being as a bridge between phenomenon and thing in itself, deny that we can make any sense of the human being as essentially thing in itself.

Alternatively one may want to deny that time is constitutive just of phenomena and attempt to introduce it into Schopenhauer's will, although such an interpretation is difficult to reconcile with Schopenhauer's interpretation of the will and of the Platonic ideas as mediating between the will and phenomena.

Or one may want to claim that in his belief in eternity Schopenhauer remains all too indebted to tradition, to Christianity. Schopenhauer sees that connection, but he

insists that we must hold on to the contrast between eternity and time, where that contrast is supported not just by the transcendence of reason over the understanding, but to that transcendence answers the transcendence of the thing in itself over phenomena.

## 2

Schopenhauer of course thinks that we cannot exist with our eyes open to our own and others' suffering and declare the world to be good. Optimism is not so much wrong as it is wicked.

I cannot here withhold the statement that optimism, where it is not merely the thoughtless talk of those who harbour nothing but words under their shallow foreheads, seems to me not merely an absurd, but also a really wicked, way of thinking, a bitter mockery of the unspeakable suffering of mankind. Let no one imagine that the Christian teaching is favourable to optimism; on the contrary, in the Gospels world and evil are used almost as synonymous expressions. (326)

But we should consider the presuppositions on which Schopenhauer's condemnation rests. In this connection I have spoken of an ethics of satisfaction. Given such an ethics we cannot say yes to the world. The turn against the world is inseparable from an ethics of satisfaction, and it matters little whether we encounter it in its Platonic, or Christian, or Schopenhauerian version. From this point of view all three positions belong together. The will turns, turns on itself, negating itself.

One difficulty with Schopenhauer's position is this: how can Schopenhauer understand this turn of the will against itself and the world? How can the human being, whose essence is said to be will, negate the essence of the world and of himself, i.e. will. Is the project not essentially self-contradictory, answering to that self-contradiction which is elevated into an ideal by the ethics of satisfaction? Is it not this ideal that we should challenge instead?

Schopenhauer does not hesitate to admit the self-contradictory character of the project he advocates. In the case of the person who renounces the world and the body that ties him to the world, the will is said to come into contradiction with itself. It is this contradiction that finds expression in the term self-renunciation.



The self is to renounce itself! How is this possible? A first answer suggests itself quite readily: as the being of reason the human being is the being capable of distancing itself from itself. Stoic ethics was witness to this possibility. The human being is able to exist at a distance from his own joys and sufferings, can assume an attitude towards them, affirm or negate them. The desire for self-renunciation can express itself in the world, in a life of asceticism and abstinence. Also in a decision to commit suicide, where like Plato before him, Schopenhauer finds suicide unacceptable and struggles to show why that should indeed be so. But the self-renunciation of the ascetic individual is praised by him. We shall have to reconsider such praise. And if such self-renunciation is indeed possible, the human being appears thus free to cast off, step out of the nexus of phenomena into which he is first of all cast. But what account can Schopenhauer give of such freedom? Does his philosophy have room for it?

## 3

Let us consider this problem more carefully. Let me begin by repeating once more what was said already in the second book: according to Schopenhauer we consider ourselves a priori free, while a posteriori we know our conduct to have been necessary and determined. Schopenhauer here follows Kant and his distinction between things-in-themselves and phenomena. With respect to the latter, a so-called free action is just as necessary as a natural event, with this important difference, motives replace causes, and the forces of nature are replaced with the notion of character:

Like every other part of nature, man is objectivity of the will; therefore all that we have said holds good of him also. Just as everything in nature has its forces and qualities that definitely react to a definite impression, and constitute its character, so man also has his character, from which the motives call forth his actions with necessity. In this way of acting his empirical character reveals itself, but in this again is revealed his intelligible character, i.e., the will in itself, of which he is the determined phenomenon he is. (287)

The equation of the **intelligible character** with the will in itself invites question: how are we to think this, given that the will is one while the individual's intelligible character would seem to be uniquely his own?

What this talk of an intelligible character implies is that it is impossible to explain human behavior by appealing to general laws. To adequately understand why a human being is acting as he is, we would have to understand his or her unique intelligible character.

This character is something that we are stuck with. It is this insight, Schopenhauer suggests, that is right about the traditional doctrine of election by grace.

In the Christian teaching we find the dogma of predestination in consequence of election and non-election by grace (*Rom. ix. 11-24*), obviously springing from the view that man does not change, but his life and conduct, in other words his **empirical character** [KH emphasis], are only the unfolding of the intelligible character, the development of decided and unalterable tendencies already recognizable in the child

(293)

If character cannot be changed, this does not mean that we cannot through education change human behavior. What education changes are the motives.

The motives determining the phenomenon or appearance of the character, or determining conduct, influence the character through the medium of knowledge. Knowledge, however, is changeable, and often vacillates between error and truth; yet, as a rule, in the course of life, it is rectified more and more, naturally in very different degrees. (294)

But changing motives do not mean that the will, the intelligible character has changed:

Therefore instruction, improved knowledge, and thus influence from without, can indeed teach the will that it erred in the means it employed. Accordingly, outside influences can bring it about that the will pursues the goal to which it aspires once for all in accordance with its inner nature, by quite a different path, and even in an entirely different object, from what it did previously. But such an influence can never bring it about that the will wills something actually different from what it has willed hitherto. This

remains unalterable, for the will is precisely this willing itself, which would otherwise have to be abolished. However, the former, the ability to modify knowledge, and through this to modify action, goes so far that the will seeks to attain its ever unalterable end, for example, Mohammed's paradise, at one time in the world of reality, at another in the world of imagination, adapting the means thereto, and so applying prudence, force, and fraud in the one case, abstinence, justice, righteousness, alms, and pilgrimage to Mecca and in the other. But the tendency and endeavour of the will have not themselves been changed on that account, still less the will itself. Therefore, although its action certainly manifests itself differently at different times, its willing has nevertheless remained precisely the same. *Velle non discitur.* (294/295)

I would like to call your attention once more to Sartre's existential psychoanalysis, which just on this point would seem to be indebted to both Kant and Schopenhauer. Like Schopenhauer, Sartre rejects the idea that we can explain individual behavior by appealing to universal laws. Take the literary disposition of the young Flaubert. Does it help to speak here of abstract desires such as we meet with in the average adolescent (*Being and Nothingness*, 558)? What we have to understand, according to Schopenhauer, if we wish to understand this behavior is the particular project that gives unity to Flaubert's life. Sartre speaks of an **original project**. That original project lets motives function as they do. It is thus strictly analogous to Schopenhauer's **intelligible character**.

A jealousy of a particular date in which a subject historicizes himself in relation to a certain woman, signifies for the one who knows how to interpret it, the total relation to the world by which the subject constitutes himself as a self. In other words, this empirical attitude is by itself the expression of the "choice of an intelligible character." (BN 563)

Schopenhauer would not like the word "choice" here. We cannot choose our intelligible character. What would govern such a choice? And I suspect that Sartre would agree. The word "choice" stands with Sartre for an upsurge that cannot itself be adequately accounted for. Schopenhauer insists that the intelligible character is irreducible. It is a

*qualitas occulta*, That is why he likens it to the Platonic idea. Implicit in this conception is a critique of Freudian psychoanalysis. The individual is more irreducible than Freud's analysis would seem to allow. Schopenhauer would arrive at something closer to Sartre's existential psychoanalysis, although the matter would be complicated in that we would have to do justice to their different conceptions of freedom and to the way in which Schopenhauer understands the species-being of the individual. Schopenhauer does invite what I take to be a necessary correction of the Sartrean account.

Two things are important in this connection: for Schopenhauer the intelligible character is no more given to the individual than to the outsider. The human being, according to Schopenhauer, is a being who has to discover who he is. And closely related is a second point: the human being may (1) misunderstand himself, (2) lose himself, (3) be alienated from himself.

The first contributes to a sense that we are free. Let us take this situation: we are facing a decision. We consider possible motives; weigh pros and contras. But, Schopenhauer suggests, we may in fact not know how we will act. We may surprise ourselves, for better or for worse. Wishing is therefore no valid indication of character. Character reveals itself only in resolve, and resolve becomes a certainty only through the deed.

Finally, therefore, in the case of man only the resolve, and not the mere wish, is a valid indication of his character for himself and for others. But for himself as for others the resolve becomes a certainty only through the deed. (300)

Therefore in a healthy mind only deeds, not desires and thoughts, weigh heavily on the conscience; for only our deeds hold up before us the mirror of our will. (300)

But the fact that the human being does not always understand himself may lead to a false conception that deflects the individual from himself. Here it is important to keep in mind that it is not only immediate desires and feelings that yield motives, but also abstract ideas. Reason brings with it the possibility of self-alienation.

Besides the intelligible and empirical characters, we have still to mention a third which is different from these two, the **acquired character**

[KH emphasis] . We obtain this only in life, through contact with the world, and it is this we speak of when anyone is praised as a person who has character, or censured as one without character. It might of course be supposed that, since the empirical character, as the phenomenon of the intelligible, is unalterable, and, like every natural phenomenon, is in itself consistent, man also for this very reason would have to appear always like himself and consistent, and would therefore not need to acquire a character for himself artificially through experience and reflection. But the case is otherwise, and although a man is always the same, he does not always understand himself, but often fails to recognize himself until he has acquired some degree of real self-knowledge. As a mere natural tendency, the empirical character is in itself irrational; indeed, its expressions are disturbed by the faculty of reason, and in fact the more so, the more intellect and power of thought the man has. For these always keep before him what belongs to man in general as the character of the species, and what is possible for him both in willing and in doing. In this way, an insight into that which alone he wills and is able to do by dint of his individuality is made difficult for him. (303)

The human being tends to measure himself by what one does, or by the universal, the character of the species, perhaps some more limited socially conditioned ideal. But in either case he is not open to what he himself is. The human being acquires character when he brings himself in tune with himself. Become who you are! makes perfect sense for Schopenhauer.

But if we have finally learnt it, we have then obtained what in the world is called character, the acquired character, which, accordingly is nothing but the most complete possible knowledge of our own individuality. It is the abstract, and consequently distinct, knowledge of the unalterable qualities of our own empirical character, and of the measure and direction of our mental and physical powers, and so of the whole strength and weakness of our own individuality.(305)

## 4

If reason allows for an alienation of the human being from himself, it also allows for the possibility of renunciation. The will wills not only particular satisfactions, but satisfaction, and it is this strange desire for complete and lasting satisfaction that marks the human condition. It is the fact that this satisfaction is denied to us humans that can let this disappointment become a motive, but a motive of a very peculiar kind: a refusal to play along; knowledge becomes a quietener of the will: the will negates itself; it longs for peace, quiet, redemption.

But is the world really a place that, once its essence has been understood, invites us to turn away from it. Does suffering outweigh happiness?

We have long since recognized this striving, that constitutes the kernel and in-itself of everything, as the same thing that in us, where it manifests itself most distinctly in the light of the fullest consciousness, is called will. We call its hindrance through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary goal, suffering; its attainment of the goal, on the other hand, we call satisfaction, well-being, happiness. We can also transfer these names to those phenomena of the world-without-knowledge which, though weaker in degree, are identical in essence. We then see these involved in constant suffering, and without any lasting happiness. For all striving springs from want or deficiency, from dissatisfaction with one's own state or condition, and is therefore suffering so long as it is not satisfied. No satisfaction, however, is lasting; on the contrary, it is always merely the starting-point of a fresh striving. We see striving everywhere impeded in many ways, everywhere struggling and fighting, and hence always as suffering. Thus that there is no ultimate aim of striving man that there is no measure or end of suffering. (309)

There is a peculiar asymmetry here. Consider once more:

We call its hindrance through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary goal, suffering; its attainment of the goal, on the other hand, we call satisfaction, well-being, happiness.

Could we not define satisfaction or perhaps pleasure, more in analogy with the definition of suffering, and call satisfaction not the attainment of the goal, but an aid placed between the will and its temporary goal? Consider the definition on p. 305:

For there is really no other pleasure than in the use and feeling of our own powers, and the greatest pain is when we are aware of a deficiency of our powers where they are. (305)

Here pleasure is not so much felt when a goal has been attained, as when in the pursuit of some goal we sense our own power. Is it the process or the goal in which the process comes to rest that is the source of pleasure? The former allows for a far more positive evaluation of life.

Par. 57 gives us another view of Schopenhauer's pessimistic view of human existence. We always live ahead of ourselves, in search of a satisfaction that must elude us:

Thus his existence, even considered from its formal side alone, is a continual rushing of the present into the dead past, a constant dying. And if we look at it also from the physical side, it is clear that, just as we know our walking to be only a constantly prevented falling, so is the life of our body only a constantly prevented dying, an ever-deferred death. Finally, the alertness and activity of our mind are also a continuously postponed boredom. Every breath we draw wards off the death that constantly impinges on us. In this way we struggle with it every second, and again at longer intervals through every meal we eat, every sleep we take, every time we warm ourselves, and so on. Ultimately death must triumph, for by birth it has already become our lot, and it plays with its prey only for a while before swallowing it up. However, we continue our life with great interest and much solicitude as long as possible, just as we blow out a soap-bubble as long and as large as possible, although with the perfect certainty that it will burst. (311)

Particularly interesting in this section is the analysis of boredom. Boredom constitutes a tension between the will and conditions that do not provide for objects of willing.

Satisfaction thus immediately transforms itself into boredom. That is why the blessed life

of the saints can be thought of by Schopenhauer only as a life of boredom. Human life is placed between the miseries of hell and the boredom of heaven. Some of these discussions remind one strongly of Søren Kierkegaard's subsequent discussion of boredom. Kierkegaard did indeed remark that his initials were indeed SA, AS spelled backwards. The negativity at the center of life will not be banished.

It is interesting to note how traditional many of the ideas developed in the fourth book are; indeed one could even speak of a barely suppressed Christianity. God may be dead, but Schopenhauer understands the Christian message as a profound expression of the human condition:

According to this, religious teaching regards every individual, on the one hand, as identical with Adam, with the representative of the affirmation of life, and to this extent as fallen into sin (original sin), suffering, and death. On the other hand, knowledge of the Idea also shows it every individual as identical with the Saviour, with the representative of the denial of the will-to-live, and to this extent as a partaking of his self-sacrifice, redeemed by his merit, and rescued from the bonds of sin and death, i.e., of the world (*Rom. v. 12-21*). (329)

Adam becomes the expression of an existence that affirms life, that finds its strongest and most obvious expression in an affirmation of the will to live. Adam and Goethe's *Prometheus* belong together. (In this connection consider Augustine's Adam in *The City of God*)

But all of this discussion depends on Schopenhauer's idealization of the idea of a final satisfaction; and it is just this that I would like to question, as of course did Nietzsche. Instead of Schopenhauer's understanding of satisfaction I would plead instead for a definition of happiness closer to the one that Schopenhauer just hints at, where happiness is also linked to a being at one with oneself, but this is not thought statically, against time, but dynamically, with time and its negativity.



## 12. Justice

### 1

Let me begin by returning to the way we human beings, by subjecting ourselves to dictates of reason, can do violence to what we are. Such violence may indeed be considered a necessary condition of functioning as part of society: we human beings need to measure ourselves by what **one does**, were the scope of this "one" may vary. But whatever the scope, when thus subjecting ourselves to others, we are not what we really are. Schopenhauer understands becoming what one is as the acquisition of character. We **acquire character** in Schopenhauer's sense when we bring ourselves in tune with our intelligible character.

If reason allows for an **alienation** of the human being from himself, it also allows for the possibility of **renunciation**. The will wills not only particular satisfactions, but satisfaction, and it is this strange **desire for complete and lasting satisfaction** that according to Schopenhauer marks the human condition. (There is a parallel here with the lower and higher mysteries in Plato's *Symposium*. The love of absolute beauty corresponds to the desire for complete satisfaction). The fact that this satisfaction is denied to us humans can let this disappointment become a motive, but a motive of a very peculiar kind: a motive for **refusing to play along**; knowledge now becomes a quieter of the will: the will negates itself; seeks peace, quiet, redemption. How this is possible, if it is indeed possible, remains a problem to which I shall return in our final session.

### 2

But is the world really a place that, once its essence has been understood, invites us to turn away from it? Does suffering outweigh happiness? Consider once more

We have long since recognized this striving, that constitutes the kernel and in-itself of everything, as the same thing that in us, where it manifests itself most distinctly in the light of the fullest consciousness, is called will. We call its hindrance through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary goal, suffering; its attainment of the goal, on the other hand, we call satisfaction, well-being, happiness. We can also transfer these names

to those phenomena of the world-without-knowledge which, though weaker in degree, are identical in essence. We then see these involved in constant suffering, and without any lasting happiness. For all striving springs from want or deficiency, from dissatisfaction with one's own state or condition, and is therefore suffering so long as it is not satisfied. No satisfaction, however, is lasting; on the contrary, it is always merely the starting-point of a fresh striving. We see striving everywhere impeded in many ways, everywhere struggling and fighting, and hence always as suffering. Thus that there is no ultimate aim of striving means that there is no measure or end of suffering. (309)

Note once more the peculiar asymmetry in this quite: could we not define satisfaction or perhaps pleasure more in analogy with the definition of suffering that we are here offered, and call satisfaction not the attainment of the goal, but **as pleasure taken in the successful pursuit of some temporary goal**? Here pleasure is not so much felt when a goal has been attained, as when in the pursuit of some goal we sense our own power. Is it the process or the achievement of the goal in which the process comes to rest that is the source of pleasure? The former allows for a far more positive evaluation of life. That this is not Schopenhauer's view is also clear.

Characteristic of Schopenhauer's understanding of satisfaction is the statement with which he introduces par. 58:

All satisfaction, or what is commonly called happiness, is always really and essentially always *negative* only, and never positive. It is not an gratification which comes to us originally and of itself, but it must always be the satisfaction of a wish. For desire, that is to say, want, is the precedent condition of every pleasure; but with the satisfaction, the desire and therefore the pleasure cease; and so the satisfaction or gratification can never be more than deliverance from a pain, from a want. (319)

Consider the rhetoric of "need" and "overflow," the latter characteristic of Nietzsche. Why not speak of an overflowing will rather than a will in need? And why not speak of satisfaction in terms of such an overflowing? And what about the disinterested pleasure we take in the beautiful according to Kant? Is that adequately understood in terms of a

need? Kant's uses of "disinterested" points in a different direction. A person in need is essentially interested. And does Schopenhauer not take aesthetic experience to be similarly disinterested. But in the cited passage Schopenhauer thinks of satisfaction as if it were always the filling of some need, the filling up of some hole, some negativity, in the image of filling one's empty stomach.

As I pointed out, we should note how traditional many of the ideas developed in the fourth book are — one could even speak of a **barely suppressed Christianity**. God may be dead, but Schopenhauer understands the Christian message as a profound expression of the human condition:

But all of this discussion depends on Schopenhauer's idealization of the **ideal of a final satisfaction**, a version of Nirvana. And it is just this that I, like Nietzsche, would like to question. Instead of Schopenhauer's understanding of satisfaction I would plead instead for a definition of happiness closer to the one I discussed before, where happiness also is linked to a being at one with oneself, but this is not to be thought statically, against time, but dynamically, with time and its negativity.

### 3

As I have pointed out repeatedly, for Schopenhauer there is no realm of **values**. It is not because we recognize things to be good that we will them, but it is because we will them that we call them good. This is to say that what we often call values are themselves **products of reason**, abstractions that stand in the same relationship to particular desires and feelings, as concepts do to particulars. Values are human creations, but this is not to say that they are therefore arbitrary. They may articulate what again and again moves human beings. E.g. the supposed value of life has its foundation in the fact that the will, wherever it appears, is according to Schopenhauer a will to live.

These values will therefore reflect man's being. But man is both, we saw, an individual, existing for himself, and a member of the species. And man is also an expression of the will: we can therefore expect the tensions between man's individual being and his species being, and the tension between our understanding ourselves as both individual and will, to express itself in the sphere of values. To the emphasis on the individual corresponds egoism, where **egoism** so understood is not confined to human

beings. Animals, too, are possessed by a desire to maintain themselves in being, often at the cost of the same will as expressed in other animals. In human beings, however, egoism finds particularly pronounced and strident expression. Human egoism not only makes the individual self-centered, but tends to bring one individual into conflict with other similarly egoistic individuals. Law and order suppress this strife. When they are removed, we see that Hobbes was pretty much correct when he described the natural state of man as a **state of war**:

But it appears most distinctly as soon as any mob is released from all law and order; we then see at once in the most distinct form the *bellum omnium contra omnes*, which Hobbes admirably described in the first chapter *De Cive*. We see not only how everyone tries to snatch from another what he himself wants, but how one often even destroys another's whole happiness or life, in order to increase by an insignificant amount his own well-being. This is the highest expression of egoism, the phenomena of which in this respect are surpassed only by those of real wickedness that seeks, quite disinterestedly, the pain and injury of others, without any advantage to itself. (333)

Human relations are presided over by **eris**.

A principal source of the suffering that we found above to be essential and inevitable to all life, is, when it actually appears in a definite form, that *Eris*, the strife of all individuals, the expression of the contradiction with which the will-to-live is affected in its inner self, and which attains visibility through the *principium individuationis*. (333)

We should keep in mind, however, that this is only part of the story: human relations are presided over also by **eros**. That has to do with insight into the superficiality of the *principium individuationis*; when we understand ourselves as members of our species, i.e., as human beings, and as phenomena of the will, we transcend ourselves as just individuals. Eros and eris are the twin deities that preside over human existence. Cf. Plato's *Symposium*.

Egoism leads to **wrong**.

Now since the will manifests that *self-affirmation* of one's own body in innumerable individuals beside one another, in one individual, by virtue of the egoism peculiar to all, it very easily goes beyond this affirmation to the *denial* of the same will appearing in another individual. The will of the first breaks through the boundary of another's affirmation of will, since the individual either destroys or injures this other body itself, or compels the powers of that other body to serve *his* will, instead of serving the will that appears in that other body. Thus if from the will, appearing as the body of another, he takes away the powers of this body, and thereby increases the power serving *his* will beyond that of his own body, he in consequence affirms his own will beyond his own body by denying the will that appears in the body of another. This breaking through the boundary of another's affirmation of will of another has at all times been distinctly recognized, and its concept has been denoted by the word *wrong* (*Unrecht*). (334)

And yet, as pointed out, the individual is not only the phenomenon, he is also will; thus he carries within himself a sense of remorse. Conscience and remorse for Schopenhauer are thus not simply founded in society, but rather in the fact that the human being has a dim understanding of himself as more than just a phenomenon.

Cannibalism, murder, injuring another are all discussed as obvious examples of doing wrong. The body and the products of its labor are the individual's. To interfere with this is to commit a wrong:

It follows from this that all genuine, i.e., moral, right of property is originally based simply and solely on elaboration and adaptation, as was pretty generally assumed even before Kant, indeed as the oldest of all the codes of law clearly and finely expresses it: "Wise men who know olden times declare that a cultured field is the property of him who cut down the wood and cleared and ploughed the land, just as an antelope belongs to the first hunter who mortally wounds it" (*Laws of Manu*, ix. 44). (336)

One senses here the influence of Locke, although Schopenhauer takes it for granted that long before Kant the position he is defending was pretty much accepted and he finds it in

the *Laws of Manu*. Assumed is the availability of land and game. The assumption of scarcity raises questions.

For it is so clear and easy to see that there can be absolutely no *just and lawful seizure* of a thing, but only a lawful *appropriation or acquired possession* of it, through our originally applying our powers to it. A thing may be developed, improved, protected, and preserved from mishaps by the efforts and exertions of some other person, however small these may be; in fact, they might be only the plucking or picking up from the ground fruit that has grown wild. The person who seizes such a thing obviously deprives the other of the result of his labour expended on it. (336)

The **right to property** is thus simply an extension of the **right** we have **to our own body**. We have a right to hand over our property to another or do with it whatever we please. **Wrong** in all its forms is interference with another's pursuit of his own being. It finds its most radical expression in murder:

As regards the *doing* of wrong generally, it occurs either through *violence* or through *cunning*; it is immaterial as regards what is morally essential. First, in the case of murder, it is morally immaterial whether I make use of a dagger or of poison; and the case of every bodily injury is analogous. The other cases of wrong can all be reduced to the fact that I, as the wrongdoer, compel the other individual to serve my will instead of his own, or to act according to my will instead of to his. On the path of violence I attain this end through physical causality; but on the path of cunning by means of motivation, in other words, of causality that has passed through knowledge. Through cunning I place before the other man's will *fictitious motives*, on the strength of which he follows *my* will, while believing he is following *his own*. As knowledge is the medium in which the motives are to be found, I can achieve this only by falsifying his knowledge, and this is the *lie*. The lie always aims at influencing another's will, not at influencing his knowledge, alone by itself and as such, but merely as a means, namely so far as it determines his will. (337)

For Schopenhauer cunning is worse than violence. For all human association is based on a certain openness, an expectation that the other is more or less as he presents himself and will behave in predictable fashion:

From what has been said, it follows, that every lie, like every act of violence, is as such wrong, since it has as such, the purpose of extending the authority of my will over other individuals, of affirming my will by denying theirs, just as violence has. The most complete lie, however, is the broken contract, since all the stipulations mentioned are here found completely and clearly present together. (338)

Moreover lying and deception can succeed only through the fact that the person who practices them is at the same time compelled to express horror and contempt of them, in order to gain confidence; and his triumph rests on the fact that he is credited with an honesty he does not possess. The deep horror everywhere excited by cunning, perfidy, and treachery rests on the fact that faithfulness and honesty are the bond which once more binds into a unity from outside the will that is split up into the plurality of individuals, and thus puts a limit to the consequences that arise from that dispersion. Faithlessness and treachery break this last, outer bond, and thus afford boundless scope for the consequences of egoism. (338-339)

The foundation of community is here subverted. Just because of this there is no longer any counterweight to egoism.

Interesting and perhaps surprising is Schopenhauer's suggestion that no wrong is committed when you fail to tell someone that he is on the wrong path or refuse to help him in some desperate situation.

The mere refusal of a truth, i.e., of a statement in general, is in itself no wrong; but every imposing of a lie is a wrong. The person who refuses to show the right path to the wanderer who has lost his way does not do him any wrong; but whoever directs him to a false path certainly does. (338)

Sins of omissions, on Schopenhauer's view, are not wrongs. Although they may be called diabolical:

Thus, for example, the refusal to help another in dire distress, the calm contemplation of another's death from starvation while we have more than enough, are certainly cruel and diabolical, but are not wrong. It can, however, be said with complete certainty that whoever is capable of carrying uncharitableness and hardness to such lengths, will quite certainly commit any wrong the moment his desires demand it, and no compulsion prevents it. (339)

The quotation shows that Schopenhauer uses wrong in a rather restricted sense. I do not commit a wrong when I do not help. A willingness to help does however point to a virtue that lifts a human being beyond his own selfishness.

Schopenhauer insists that the notion of wrong has primacy over that of right. Right is the negation of wrong.

The concept of *right*, however, as the negation of wrong, finds its principal application, and doubtless also its first origin, in those cases where an attempted wrong by violence is warded off. This warding off cannot itself be wrong, and consequently is right, although the violent action committed in connexion with it, and considered merely in itself and in isolation, would be wrong. (339)

The conception of right is used especially when I am engaged in an activity that normally would be considered wrong, but which is justified by an argument that it is necessary to ward off some wrong directed against me. When force is used against me I have a right to use force in turn. And similarly, when violence has been used against me and I try to meet such violence with cunning the lie is easily justified. Here Schopenhauer disagrees with Kant:

Therefore, anyone acts with perfect right who assures a highway robber who is searching him that he has nothing more upon him. In just the same way, a person acts rightly who by a lie induces a burglar at night to enter a cellar, and there locks him up. A person who is carried off in captivity by robbers, pirates for example, has the right to kill them not only by violence but even by cunning, in order to gain his freedom. For this reason also, a promise is in no way binding when it has been extorted by a direct bodily



act of violence, since the person who suffers such compulsion can with absolute right free himself by killing, not to mention deceiving his oppressor. (340)

For Schopenhauer the terms "right" and "wrong" do have a meaning even in the state of nature. There is thus a natural morality. On this point he criticizes Hobbes. But Schopenhauer is forced to admit, as was Locke before him, that such natural morality is rather ineffective against the selfishness of man. "Right conduct from moral grounds," he argues, "is not to be expected."

4

It is for this reason that human beings set up political organizations. The **state** itself is a product of reason. Egoistic as man is, that very egoism fills him with fear that the egoism of others will interfere with his own. First of all the human being wants to live and to live with a minimum of suffering. But the suffering that others are able to inflict on me is likely to outweigh the joy I get from stepping on them in the pursuit of my own selfish ends:

The faculty of reason that is common to all these individuals, and enables them to know not merely the particular case, as the animals do, but also the whole abstractly in its connexion, has taught them to discern the source of that suffering. It has made them mindful of the means of diminishing, or if possible suppressing, this suffering by a common sacrifice which is, however, outweighed by the common advantage resulting therefrom. (342-343)

This faculty of reason also found that, because everything was here left to chance, everyone was bound to fear that the pleasures of occasional wrongdoing would much more rarely fall to his lot than would the pain of suffering wrong. Reason recognized from this that, to diminish the suffering spread over all, as well as to distribute it as uniformly as possible, the best and only means was to spare all men the pain of suffering wrong by all men's renouncing the pleasure to be obtained from doing wrong. This means is the *State contract* of the *law*. It is readily

devised and gradually perfected by the egoism, which, by using the faculty of reason, proceeds methodically, and forsakes its one-sided point of view. This origin of the State and of the law, as I have here mentioned, was described by Plato in the *Republic*. (343)

The state, according to Schopenhauer, is not an institution that makes human beings less egoistic. Quite to the contrary: it is born of and supported by egoism. In this respect it is very different from the family. If Schopenhauer is right, we have to separate sharply between social groupings that would have us affirm ourselves as parts of a larger whole — the paradigm is the family — and an organization like the state, which is born of a contract that serves the individual ends of human beings. Schopenhauer insists thus on a sharp **separation of the social from the political**. The point of the state is to diminish the suffering of individuals by creating barriers to individual selfishness. Legislation should therefore be only concerned with deeds, not with motives, and not with the deed committed except in so far as it might invite, if left unpunished, future repetition.

The State also has by no means to eradicate the foolish plan, the inclination to wrongdoing, the evil disposition, but only to place beside every possible motive for committing a wrong a more powerful motive for leaving it undone, in the inescapable punishment. Accordingly the criminal code is as complete a register as possible of counter-motives to all the criminal actions that can possibly be imagined, — both in the abstract, in order to make concrete application of any case that occurs. (344)

The state, according to Schopenhauer, should not be understood as a moral institution. Certainly it cannot cure the individual of his natural egoism as Kant had thought.

As we have said, the State is so little directed against egoism in general and as such, that, on the contrary, it is precisely from egoism that it has sprung, and it exists merely to serve it. This egoism well understands itself, proceeds methodically, and goes from the one-sided to the universal point of view, and thus by summation is the common egoism of all. The State is set up on the correct assumption that pure morality, i.e. right conduct from moral grounds, is not to be expected; otherwise, it would

itself be superfluous. Thus the State, aiming at well-being, is by no means directed against egoism, but only against the injurious consequences of egoism arising out of the plurality of egoistic individuals, reciprocally affecting them, and disturbing their well-being. (345)

The state should be guided by the pure doctrine of right.

But only if positive legislation is essentially determined throughout in accordance with the guidance of the pure doctrine of right, and a reason for each of its laws can be indicated in the pure theory of right, is the resultant legislation really a *positive* right, and the State a *legal and just* association, a State in the proper sense of the word, a morally admissible, not an immoral institution. In the opposite case, positive legislation is the establishment of a *positive wrong*; it is a publicly avowed enforced wrong. Such is every despotism, the constitution of most Mohammedan kingdoms; and several parts of many constitutions are of the same kind, as, for example, serfdom, villeinage, and so on. (346)

Only when these conditions are met is the state a legal and just association. It is thus possible for a state to be an illegal or an immoral institution. For Schopenhauer there can thus be no justified law requiring that all go to church on Sunday or eat bean soup on Thursdays or refrain from certain sexual acts with consenting adults.

Schopenhauer's view that punishment is directed towards the future once again distinguishes him from Kant, who had argued that to punish the offender is to give him his due. Every wrong according to Kant ought to be punished. Schopenhauer criticizes this. He criticizes especially punishment for the sake of revenge. This is just to compound suffering and therefore wrong.

And yet there is a case where Schopenhauer is willing to credit someone seeking revenge with a virtue that goes beyond selfishness:

Sometimes we see a man so profoundly indignant at a great outrage, which he has experienced or perhaps, only witnessed, that he deliberately and irretrievably stakes his own life in order to take vengeance on the perpetrator of that outrage. We see him search for years for some mighty oppressor, finally murder him, and then himself die on the scaffold, as he

had foreseen. Indeed, often he did not attempt in any way to avoid this, since his life was of value to him only as a means for revenge. Such instances are found especially among the Spaniards. Now, if we carefully consider the spirit of that mania for retaliation, we find it to be very different from common revenge, which desires to mitigate suffering endured by the sight of suffering caused; indeed, we find that what it aims at deserves to be called not so much revenge as punishment. For in it there is really to be found the intention of an effect on the future through the example, and without any selfish aim either for the avenging individual, who perishes in the attempt, or for a society that secures its own safety through laws. This punishment is carried out by the individual, not by the State; nor is it in fulfillment of a law; on the contrary, it always concerns a deed which the State either would not or could not punish, and whose punishment it condemns. (358-359)

The will-to-live, though it still affirms itself here, no longer depends on the individual phenomenon, on the individual person, but embraces the Idea of man. It desires to keep the phenomenon of this Idea pure from such a monstrous and revolting outrage. It is a rare, significant, and even sublime trait of character by which the individual sacrifices himself, in that he strives to make himself the arm of eternal justice, whose true inner nature of which he still fails to recognize. (359)

Heinrich von Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* offers a striking portrayal of such an individual. What finds expression here is no longer merely that reasonable egoism which gives birth to the state, but a more profound understanding of the human being as phenomenon of the Platonic Idea. We are back with the discussion of self-sacrifice, which always is witness to an understanding that has recognized the worth of the individual depends on the idea of a humanity that transcends the individual.

Schopenhauer invokes here his own idea of **eternal justice**, which he opposes to that temporal justice, which is directed towards the future and the prevention of future suffering.

Schopenhauer's understanding of eternal justice is tied to his thought that in every wrongdoing punishment and offense are linked in a way that makes them inseparable. One could point to the Christian understanding of a divine judgment as one expression of this thought. Schopenhauer prefers the Indian myth of the transmigration of souls.

What is here meant is the myth of the transmigration of souls. This teaches that all sufferings inflicted in life by man on other beings must be expiated in a following life in this world by precisely the same sufferings. It goes to the length of teaching that a person who kills only an animal will be born as just such an animal in endless time, and will suffer the same death. (356)

That this is only a myth that clothes what Schopenhauer takes to be the profound insight that we are that will that finds expression in every creature in the language of phenomenal reality is evident. But how seriously Schopenhauer takes this myth is shown by the way he concludes this paragraph with remarks that ridicule the English clergymen who would bring the Indians the blessings of Christianity.

Never has a myth been, and never will one be, more closely associated with a philosophical truth accessible to so few, than this very ancient teaching of the noblest and oldest of peoples. Degenerate as this race may now be in many respects, this truth still prevails with it as the universal creed of the people, and it has a decided influence on life today, as it had four thousand years ago. Therefore Pythagoras and Plato grasped with admiration that *non plus ultra* of mythical expression, took it over from India or Egypt, revered it, applied it, and themselves believed it, to what extent we know not. We, on the contrary, now send to the Brahmans English clergymen and evangelical linen-weavers, in order out of sympathy to put them right, and to point out to them that they are created out of nothing and that they ought to be grateful and pleased about it. But it is just the same as if we fired a bullet against a cliff. In India our religions will never at any time take root; the ancient wisdom of the human race will not be supplanted by the events in Galilee. On the

contrary, Indian wisdom flows back to Europe, and will produce a fundamental change in our knowledge and thought. (356 -357)

What finds expression in the myth of transmigration is the insight that I am the will of which the whole of nature is an expression. There is a sense in which I thus am this other thing: *Tat tvam asi* — This art thou.

That insight remains hidden from him who remains caught up in the sphere of phenomena, in the *principium individuationis*.

On the contrary, the eyes of the uncultured individual are clouded, as the Indians say, by the veil of Maya. To him is revealed not the thing-in-itself, but only the phenomenon in time and space, in the *principium individuationis*, and in the remaining forms of the principle of sufficient reason. In this form of his limited knowledge he sees not the inner nature of things, which is one, but its phenomena as separated, detached, innumerable, very different, and indeed opposed. For pleasure appears to him as one thing and pain as quite another: one man as tormentor and murderer, another as martyr and victim; wickedness as one thing, evil as another. He sees one person living in pleasure, abundance, and delights, and at the same time another dying in agony of want and cold at the former's very door. He then asks, where retribution is to be found? He himself in the vehement pressure of will which is his origin and inner nature, grasps the pleasures and enjoyments of life, embraces them firmly, and does not know that, by this very act of his will, he seizes and hugs all the pains and miseries of life, at the sight of which he shudders. (352)

But those who have seen through the superficiality of phenomenal reality recognize that Tormentor and tormented are one. The former is mistaken in thinking he does not share the torment, the latter in thinking he does not share the guilt. (354)

And yet it is difficult to see how the avenger discussed at the end of par. 64 becomes intelligible as someone who wants to carry eternal justice so understood into the world of experience. Indeed such an attempt really makes no sense. Eternal justice has nothing to do with particular experiences. Schopenhauer's suggestion that such an

avenger dies for the idea of humanity is more promising. But this presupposes that the individual recognizes and affirms himself as part of an ongoing community, not just as a phenomenon of the will.

### 13. Resignation

#### 1

Last time I pointed out that Schopenhauer gives a rather narrow meaning to "**wrong**." An action is wrong when it compels an individual to serve another's will rather than his own. The self-will of an individual infringes on that of another, where either cunning or violence may be used. I noted that this definition does not cover sins of omission.

Schopenhauer insists that the notion of wrong has primacy over that of **right**. Right is the negation of wrong. And the conception of right is used especially when I am engaged in an activity that normally would be considered wrong, but which is justified by an argument that it is necessary to ward off some wrong directed against me. Think of what might be called a just war. When force is used against me I have a right to use force in turn. And similarly, when violence has been used against me and I try to meet such violence with cunning, the lie is easily justified. Here Schopenhauer disagrees with Kant.

For Schopenhauer the terms "right" and "wrong" do have a meaning even in the state of nature. There is thus a natural morality. On this point he criticizes Hobbes. But what does this disagreement presupposes. If the principle of individuation ruled human behavior without restriction Hobbes would seem to be right. That Schopenhauer disagrees with Hobbes presupposes that even in the state of nature we feel that there is something wrong when I push my self-interest to a point where it seriously infringes on that of my fellow human beings.

But Schopenhauer is forced to admit, as was Locke before him, that such a natural morality is rather ineffective against the selfishness of man. "Right conduct from moral grounds," he argues, "is not to be expected." It is for this reason that human beings set up political organizations. The state itself is a product of reason. Egoistic as man is, that very egoism fills him with fear that the egoism of others will interfere with his own. First of all the human being wants to live and to live with a minimum of suffering. But the suffering that others are able to inflict on me is likely to outweigh the joy I get from stepping on them in the pursuit of my own selfish ends. The state, according to Schopenhauer, is thus not an institution that makes human beings less egoistic. Quite to



the contrary: it is born of and supported by egoism. In this respect it is very different from the family. If Schopenhauer is right, we have to separate sharply between social groupings that would have us affirm ourselves as parts of a larger whole — the paradigm is the family -- and an organization like the state, which is born of a contract that serves the individual ends of human beings.

## 2

Schopenhauer's admission that there is behavior that we cannot call wrong in his sense, but yet consider diabolical suggests that true virtue and the diabolical must be sought beyond right and wrong and beyond that egoism presupposed by the distinction between right and wrong. Also beyond what we ordinarily call good and bad.

What do we mean by **good**? Schopenhauer insists on its relative nature. When we declare something to be good we declare it fit for or suitable for a particular effort of the will.

We will now trace the meaning of the concept good; this can be done with very little trouble. This concept is essentially relative, and denotes the fitness or suitability of an object to any definite effort of the will.

Therefore everything agreeable to the will in any of its manifestations and fulfilling the will's purpose, is thought of through the concept good, however different in other respects such things may be. (360)

Good is what suits the will. Schopenhauer goes on to distinguish two subspecies of the good, the **agreeable** and the **useful**, where the useful may be understood as a means to the agreeable:

The concept of the good is divided into two subspecies, that of the directly present satisfaction of the will in each case, and that of its merely indirect satisfaction concerning the future, in other words, the agreeable and the useful. (360)

The good so understood is essentially relative. It follows that there can be no absolute good:

It follows from the above remarks that the good is according to its concept, *ton pros ti*, hence every good is essentially relative; for it has its

essential nature only in its relation to a desiring will. Accordingly absolute good is a contradiction; highest good, *summum bonum*, signifies the same thing, namely in reality a final satisfaction of the will after which no fresh willing would occur; a last motive, the attainment of which would give the will an imperishable satisfaction. According to the so far carried on in this fourth book, such a thing cannot be conceived. (362)

We should be familiar with this point. It is established by the essential incompatibility of happiness, so understood, and the essence of the will.

And yet Schopenhauer does not want to give up the idea of a *summum bonum* altogether:

However, if we wish to give an honorary, or so to speak an emeritus position to an old expression, that from custom we do not like entirely to discard, we may, metaphorically and figuratively call the complete self-effacement and denial of the will, true of will-lessness, which alone stills and silences forever the craving of the will; which alone is world-redeeming; and which we shall now consider at the conclusion of our whole discussion the *summum bonum*. (362)

A first pointer in the direction of this "highest good" is provided by the call of conscience. What calls the human being in conscience is tied to a fleeting recognition that the individual is only the phenomenon, not the thing in itself.

Consequently, the wicked man's inward alarm at his own deed, which he himself tries to conceal from himself, contains that presentiment of the nothingness and mere delusiveness of the *principium individuationis*, and of the distinction established by this principle between him and others. (366)

Egoism, as we have seen, presupposes a superficial understanding of the self. Some such recognition would seem to be present already in the just individual who refuses to do wrong even though there is nothing that restrains him, no penalty that would be exacted if he were to do wrong.

We have adequately explained above what right and wrong are; therefore we can briefly say here that the man who voluntarily recognizes and

accepts that merely moral boundary between wrong and right, even where no State or any other authority secures it, and who consequently, according to our explanation, never in the affirmation of his own will goes to the length of denying the will that manifests itself in another individual, is just. (370)

We now see that for such a just man the *principium individuationis* is no longer an absolute partition, as it is for the bad; that he does not, like the bad man, affirm merely his own phenomenon of will and deny all others; that others are not for him mere masks, whose inner nature is quite different from his. On the contrary, he shows by his way of acting that he again recognizes his own inner being, namely the will-to-live as a thing-in-itself in the phenomenon of another given to him merely as representation. (370)

And the more the individual sees that essentially his being is the same as that of his fellow human beings, indeed the same as that of all beings, the less will he want to push his own individual ends at the expense of theirs. He will refuse to hurt even an animal. This disregard of one's own well being can lead even to self-sacrifice:

We have seen how, from seeing through the *principium individuationis*, in the lesser degree justice arises, and in the higher degree real goodness of disposition, a goodness that shows itself as pure, i.e., disinterested, affection towards others. Now where this becomes complete, the individuality and fate of others are treated entirely like his own. It can never go farther, for no reason exists for preferring another's individuality to one's own. Yet the great number of the other individuals whose whole happiness or life is in danger can outweigh the regard for one's own particular well-being. In such a case, the character that has reached the highest goodness and perfect magnanimity will sacrifice its well-being and its life completely for the well-being of many others. So died Codrus, and Leonidas, and Regulus, Decius Mus, and Arnold von Winkelried; so does everyone die who voluntarily and consciously goes to certain death for his friends, or his native land. And everyone also stands at this level who

willingly takes suffering and death upon himself for the maintenance of what conduces and rightfully belongs to the welfare of all mankind, in other words, for universal and important truths, and for the eradication of great errors. So died Socrates and Giordano Bruno; and so did many a hero of truth meet his death at the stake at the hands of the priests. (375)

And yet, Schopenhauer's explanation of such self-sacrifice is not convincing and here I return to a point I made last time. Leonidas did not hesitate to kill. So it was not a loyalty to human beings as such that explains his sacrifice. It was very much a loyalty to Sparta and perhaps to Greece. We have here once more examples of the individual experiencing himself as a part. But that of which he feels a part is here a quite specific community; he thus remains in an important sense bound to the realm of phenomena.

More difficult is the case of Socrates. He, too, feels that he, like all human beings, belongs to a higher realm. But this realm is finally not of this world. Socrates has seen through the phenomenality of the individual and because he has done so, he can accept death. To be sure, as the *Crito* shows, he also feels bound to Athens, but a deeper bond would seem to tie him to the timeless realm of the forms.

But in this connection we must not forget that unlike Schopenhauer, Socrates, too, or should we say Diotima, finally comes down in the *Symposium* on the side of a procreative eros, which carries something of the eternal realm of the forms into time.

In that connection Schopenhauer, too, returns to the traditional idea of two kinds of love: **eros**, tied to the will, to selfishness, and **agape**, tied to selflessness, to genuine sympathy (375/376 - 3). That very opposition is, however, challenged by the way Schopenhauer sketches the progress towards asceticism. Eros and agape get entangled. The *Song of Songs* is a key text for those who want to explore that entanglement.

There would seem to be two routes to Schopenhauer's *summum bonum*, an **aesthetic** and a **moral route**. The beautiful, as Schopenhauer understands it, prefigures Nirvana. The aesthetic blurs with the ascetic.

Different is what we can call the moral route. For Schopenhauer sympathy must lead to an increased awareness of suffering:

If that veil of Maya, the *principium individuationis*, is lifted from the eyes of a man to such an extent that he no longer makes the egoistical

distinction between himself and the person of others, but takes as much interest in the sufferings of other individuals as in his own, and thus is not only benevolent and charitable in the highest degree, but even ready to sacrifice his own individuality whenever several others can be saved thereby, then it follows automatically that such a man, recognizing in all beings his own true and innermost self, must also regard the endless suffering of all that lives as his own, and thus take upon himself the pain of the whole world. (378)

We readily see why for Schopenhauer the optimist cannot be in his sense a truly virtuous person, for virtue, as he now understands it, is tied to sympathy; but sympathy brings with it a sympathetic co-suffering of all the ills of the world. We do not have to invoke Auschwitz or such catastrophes as the current suffering in the Sudan. There is more than enough suffering much closer to us. How can one be an optimist given the ills of the world?

Such insight, according to Schopenhauer, leads finally to a decision to negate the condition of all suffering, the will. Thus we find a decision not to give in to the hunger that bids us eat, not to sexual desire, which is an expression not only of the individual will, but of the will of the species, so that in negating it not only the individual is negated, but the species as well. For a person who has thus negated the will, death will appear no longer as an enemy, but as a welcome friend. Thus the dying Socrates asked that a cock be sacrificed to the god of healing. Schopenhauer is thinking of a different kind of hero:

Thus he resorts to fasting, and even to self-castigation and self torture, in order that, by constant privation and suffering, he may more and more break down and kill the will, which he recognizes and abhors as the source of his own suffering existence and of the world. Finally, if death comes, which breaks up the phenomenon of this will, the essence of such will having long since expired through free denial of itself except for the feeble residue which appears as the vitality of this body; then it is most welcome and is cheerfully accepted as a longed for deliverance. It is not merely the phenomenon, as in the case of others, that comes to an end with death; but the inner being itself that is abolished; this had a feeble existence merely

in the phenomenon. This last slender bond is now severed; for him who ends thus, the world has at the same time ended. (382)

It is in this Schopenhauer sees the essence of saintliness, be these saints Christian, Buddhist, or Hindu. Only superficially do the great religions differ. At bottom they all mean the same. They all preach a salvation linked to self-negation. Whether such preaching invokes God or comes from an atheistic religion matters little. It is indeed possible to interpret Schopenhauer as a forerunner of that God-is-dead theology that became popular some twenty years ago. (Cf. Altizer, Van Buren) Schopenhauer thus claims that his view expresses the essence of Christian teaching, an essence he finds expressed, quite characteristically, more in Meister Eckhart than in the New Testament.

In my opinion the teachings of these genuine Christian mystics are related to those of the New Testament as alcohol is to wine; in other words, what becomes visible to us in the New Testament as if through a veil and mist, stands before us in the works of the mystics without cloak or disguise, in full clearness and distinctness. Finally, we might also regard the New Testament as the first initiation, the mystics as the second. (387)

More clearly still does it speak to us in Hindu literature:

We see that it ordains love of our neighbour with complete denial of self-love; love in general, not limited to the human race, but embracing all that lives; charitableness even to the giving away of one's hard-won daily earnings; boundless patience towards all offenders; return of all evil, however bad it may be, with goodness and love; voluntary and cheerful endurance of every insult and ignominy; abstinence from all animal food; perfect chastity and renunciation of all sensual pleasure for him who aspires to real holiness; the throwing-away of all property; the forsaking of every dwelling-place and of all kinsfolk; deep unbroken solitude spent in silent contemplation with voluntary penance and terrible slow self-torture for the complete mortification of the will, ultimately going as far as voluntary death by starvation, facing crocodiles, or jumping over the consecrated precipice in the Himalaya, or being buried alive, or flinging

oneself under the wheels of the huge car that drives round with the images of the gods amid the singing, shouting, and dancing of bayaderes. (388)

What a Dionysian image! This demands careful consideration.

4

This then is the one sense in which Schopenhauer does admit of conversion. Conversion does not mean here to exchange one character for another; rather it means that all worldly motives are undercut and rendered ineffective. Psychology must fail to understand such conversions. That also goes for whatever account Schopenhauer provides.

Given such an understanding it is to be expected that Schopenhauer, as did Plato before him, would have to deal with the problem of suicide: Why not suicide? Socrates raises this question and answers it mythically by stating that we do not belong to ourselves but to the divine. Schopenhauer answers by pointing out that suicide is tied to the individual, that it is very much an egoistic act. And since it is directed only against this isolated phenomenon, not against the will itself, it must be considered ineffective.

Suicide is not the proper form of negation. Salvation requires a more profound insight:

The will itself cannot be abolished by anything except knowledge. Therefore the only path to salvation is that the will should appear freely and without hindrance, in order that it can recognize or know its own nature in this phenomenon. Only in consequence of this knowledge can the will abolish itself, and thus end the suffering that is inseparable from its phenomenon. (400)

Such knowledge may indeed lead to death. An individual may simply stop caring about life sufficiently to stay alive. Once again Schopenhauer cites in support a newspaper report:

"It is reported from Bern that in a dense forest near Thurnen a small hut was discovered in which was lying the decomposed corpse of a man who had been dead for about a month. His clothes gave little information about his social position. Two very fine shirts lay beside him. The most

important thing was a Bible, interleaved with blank pages, which had been partly written on by the deceased. In it he announced the day of his departure from home (but it did not mention where his home was). He then said that he was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit of God to pray and fast. On his journey to that spot, he had already fasted for seven days and had then eaten again. After settling down here, he began to fast again and indeed fasted for as many days. Every day was now indicated by a stroke, of which there were five, after which the pilgrim presumably died. There was also found a letter to a clergyman about a sermon that the deceased had heard him preach; but the address was missing." (401)

I find this example no more satisfactory than the example of the Stoic sage, which Schopenhauer had rejected at the end of the first book. Does this promise of an escape from the will that Schopenhauer holds out even make sense? Let us consider it more carefully.

Schopenhauer's whole argument rests on his correct insight into the self-contradictory project that rules what I have called an ethics of satisfaction. As Schopenhauer puts it: there is no *summum bonum*. The very idea is self-contradictory. The human being cannot hold on to both being and satisfaction. But is Schopenhauer not attempting something of just that sort with his reinterpretation of the *summum bonum* as self-negation?

We might perhaps regard the whole of our discussion (now concluded) of what I call the denial of the will as inconsistent with the previous explanation of necessity, that appertains just as much to motivation as to every other form of the principle of sufficient reason. As a result of that necessity, motives, like all causes, are only occasional causes on which the character unfolds its nature, and reveals it with the necessity of a natural law. For this reason we positively denied freedom as *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*. Yet far from suppressing this here, I call it to mind. In truth, real freedom, in other words, independence of the principle of sufficient reason, belongs to the will as thing-in-itself, not to the phenomenon, whose essential form is everywhere this principle of



sufficient reason, the element or necessity. But the only case where that freedom can become immediately visible in the phenomenon is the one where it makes an end of what appears, and because the mere phenomenon, in so far as it is a link in the chain of causes, namely the living body, still continues to exist in time that contain only phenomena, the will, manifesting itself through this phenomenon, is then in contradiction with it, since it denies what the phenomenon expresses. In such a case the genitals, for example, as the visibility of the sexual impulse, are there and in health; but yet, in the inmost consciousness, no sexual satisfaction is desired. The whole body is the visible expression of the will-to-live, yet the motives corresponding to this will no longer act; indeed, the dissolution of the body, the end of the individual, and thus the greatest suppression of the natural will, is welcome and desired. Now, the contradiction between our assertions, on the one hand, of the necessity of the will's determination through motives according to the character, and our assertion, on the other, of the possibility of the whole suppression of the will, whereby motives become powerless, is only the repetition in the reflection of philosophy of this *real* contradiction that arises from the direct encroachment of the freedom of the will-in-itself, which knows no necessity, on the necessity of its phenomenon. But the key to the reconciliation of these contradictions lies in the fact that the state in which the character is withdrawn from the power of motives does not proceed directly from the will, but from a changed form of knowledge. Thus, so long as the knowledge is only that which is involved in the *principium individuationis*, and which positively follows the principle of sufficient reason, the power of the motives is irresistible. (403)

Consider carefully the ending of the book where Schopenhauer's understanding of this *summum bonum* is spelled out:

But we now turn our glance from our own needy and perplexed nature to those who have overcome the world, in whom the will, having reached complete self-knowledge, found itself again in everything, and then freely

denied itself, and who then merely wait to see the last trace of the will vanish with the body that is animated by that race. Then, instead of the restless pressure and effort; instead of the constant transition from desire to apprehension, and from joy to sorrow; instead of the never-satisfied and never-dying hope that constitutes the life of the man who wills, we see that peace that is higher than all reason, that ocean-like calmness of the spirit, that deep tranquility, that unshakable confidence and serenity, whose mere reflection in the countenance, as depicted by Raphael and Correggio is an complete and certain gospel. Only knowledge remains, the will has vanished. We then look with deep and painful yearning on that state, beside which the miserable and desperate nature of our own appears in the clearest light by the contrast. Yet this consideration is the only one that can permanently console us, when, on the one hand, we have recognized incurable suffering and endless misery as essential to the phenomenon of will, to the world, and, on the other, see the world melt away with the abolished will, and retain before us only empty nothingness. In this way, therefore, by contemplating the life and conduct of saints, to meet with whom is of course rarely granted to us in our own experience, but who are brought to our notice by their recorded history, and, vouched for with the stamp of truth by art, we have to banish the dark impression of that nothingness which as the final goal hovers behind all virtue and holiness, and which we fear as children fear darkness. We must not even evade it, as the Indians do, by myths and meaningless words, such as reabsorption in *Brahman* or the *Nirvana* of the Buddhists. On the contrary, we freely acknowledge that what remains after the complete abolition of the will is, for all who are still full of the will, assuredly nothing. But also conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and denied itself, this very real world, with all its suns and galaxies, is — nothing. (411-412)

Given this embrace of nothing, is the argument against suicide, presented earlier, really to be taken at face value? Is it not possible that suicide is to be rejected because it really

leaves us with nothing or more precisely, does not leave us at all? But how then are we to understand the ending of vol. I?

This leads to a further consideration: to what extent does Schopenhauer's metaphysics reflect the project that he is pursuing? In the end Schopenhauer, too, despite the way he brings the human subject into the world, into the body, and thus into time, despite the way his understanding of being as will would seem to join being to time, instead of thinking being with time, would seem to return to the tradition that thinks being against time. The argument by which the key distinction between phenomena and the timeless will is established deserves special attention here. The consideration by which it is supported would seem to be Kantian: time is constitutive of phenomena. But does this really give us an adequate reason for insisting that the thing in itself transcends time? In what sense can we hold on to anything like a thing when we turn to Schopenhauer's Platonic ideas or to the will? Does it make sense to claim, appealing to the fact that time is constitutive of phenomena that there must be a timeless thing in itself?

And what sense can we make of the will negating itself?

And yet Schopenhauer has made at least two contributions which we should not lose sight of:

1. The inversion of the Platonic conception of human being, that we do not so much have bodies as we are our bodies, where his insistence on the tension between individual and species being, for Schopenhauer part of our biological makeup, deserves special emphasis.

2. The clear articulation of the tension that rules what I have called the ethics of satisfaction: the tension between satisfaction and the temporality of life.

This tension cannot finally be resolved. As Sartre was to put it, given such an ethics we cannot help but understand the desire for satisfaction that defines humanity as a vain passion, an understanding that will be attended by dreams of another mode of being, not subject to the will, to time. Schopenhauer himself can be accused of having dreamed such a dream. Schopenhauer thus provides us with a key to an understanding of modern aestheticism, also to the modern flirtation with mysticism, the modern journey to the East which he so well illustrates.

Nietzsche will accept much of Schopenhauer's anthropology, but will refuse to follow him in his pessimism. In this sense, I suggested, Nietzsche may be understood as seizing the possibility of an optimistic reader Schopenhauer envisions, thinking of Goethe, someone who accepts the metaphysics, but rejects Schopenhauer's ethics, although rejection of the latter will also bring with it an increasingly vigorous questioning of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Recall once more Nietzsche's praise of the Greeks who were said to be profound precisely because they embraced the superficial.