

SCHOPENHAUER: an evaluation of his *theory of will*

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Abstract

The aims of this paper are twofold: firstly, to give the reader a comprehensive- but not exhaustive- understanding of Schopenhauer's theory of will, and, secondly, to elucidate certain problems inherent in this theory. Schopenhauer's epistemology, dual aspect ontology, aesthetics, ethics, and pessimism are explored. Additionally, a cursory exposition of Kant's metaphysics is presented, along with Schopenhauer's critique of this. Possible solutions to problems in his theory are expounded and subsequently critiqued. Most salient of these problems is his identification of the will with the Kantian thing-in-itself. I argue that Schopenhauer's theory of will contradicts the Kantian confines on metaphysical knowledge. Consequently, and in light of his own epistemology, there are serious, if not intractable, problems with his contentions that the will is the Kantian thing-in-itself, and it is knowable.

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Abbreviations:

Abbreviations within the text:

PSR: principle of sufficient reason

Abbreviations within footnotes (works cited):

FR: *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*

WWR: *The World as Will and Representation*

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was one of the greatest nineteenth century philosophers. Albeit still standing as an outsider in academic philosophy, he revolutionized philosophical thought and made substantive contributions to almost all divisions of philosophy. With an uncompromising honesty and profound commitment to truth, he tackled the most universal, daunting, and esoteric of human inquiries. He resolved- without making recourse to authority or convention- to understand and expound *what* precisely this world was, probing what lies beneath, and is common to, all phenomena. He endeavoured to explicate *the meaning* behind the ubiquitous and perpetual strife characteristic of the world, and of the suffering and solicitude inherent in sentient life. Furthermore, he went to great lengths in detailing the methods in which we can be liberated from this worldly ‘penal colony’. His theory of the ‘will’, the focus of the current study, is central to all such queries, musings, and methods of liberation. Indeed, it is the dominant leitmotif subsumed in all of his thought; the all-embracing nexus of his philosophy. It proved extremely contentious and original, and influenced such great and diverse thinkers as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Erwin Schrödinger (1887-1961) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951).

It is my intention in this thesis to 1. Provide a general synopsis of Schopenhauer’s epistemology and dual aspect account of reality (both requisite knowledge for a correct understanding of the will). 2. Pay special consideration to his theory of will, 3. Delineate certain problems with this theory 4. To offer possible resolutions to these problems, and, finally, 5. To examine the cogency of these resolutions themselves. As such, the main questions I undertake in this study are 1. “How do we know the world in which we inhabit”? 2. “What exactly is the will”? 2. “How do we know the will”? and, 3. “What problems (i.e. inconsistencies and contradictions etc.) are in Schopenhauer’s account of it”? I will refer to other aspects of Schopenhauer’s philosophy (aesthetics, ethics, etc.); such aspects being inextricably linked, and thus conducing to, a thorough understanding of the will.

In *Chapter 1*, after some prefatory remarks on pertinent terms used by Schopenhauer, I shall investigate his work *On the Fourfold Root of The Principle of Sufficient Reason*, which,

along with the knowledge of such terms, will provide a requisite backdrop to the subject matter covered in this thesis. I will then examine the world as constituted by representation.

In *Chapter 2* his theory of will shall be studied in detail, starting from its intimate relationship to Kant's noumenon. Subsequent to this I will look at how Schopenhauer deemed the will knowable through the body, and, additionally, how it is related to his notorious pessimism. Its relationship to his aesthetics, chiefly in the contemplation of Platonic Ideas, will then be expounded. Finally I will demonstrate how, through its negation, human beings can attain lasting tranquillity.

In *Chapter 3* I will examine the salient problems in Schopenhauer's theory of will and subsequently delineate possible solutions to these. I will then address the soundness of these proposed solutions.

In *Chapter 4* the main points of this study will be summarized and I shall offer some concluding statements.

Schopenhauer conceives of the world as having *two distinct aspects*. Known as the *dual aspect account of reality*, this purports that the world exists concurrently as a *representation* (the *phenomenal* world), and as *will* (the *noumenal*¹ world). We understand reality exclusively and exhaustively through these two modes. I shall firstly consider the world as representation, and then as will. Schopenhauer employs certain terms in his articulation of this dual natured aspect of the world, and all such terms are foundational to, and ubiquitous, within his works. Therefore it is prudent, by way of facilitating a coherent and lucid understanding of his thought, to briefly examine these terms.

1.2 Terminology

Schopenhauer has stringent definitions of the terms *knowledge*, *representation*, *subject*, and *object*, and all such terms are greatly interconnected. *Knowledge*, for Schopenhauer, entails the *awareness of objects*, all of which are *representations*. To know something is for *something to be present in consciousness as an object of representation*. All knowledge presupposes *something to be known*. Knowledge “is above all else and essentially representation”² Now a *representation*³ is “A very complicated *physiological* occurrence in an animal’s brain, whose result is the consciousness of a *picture or image* at that very spot”⁴. As such, all representations exist *entirely within our consciousness*; they do not possess an external reality which parallels the internal reality we are conscious of. To be a *subject* is to be “the supporter of the world, the universal condition of all that appears”⁵. Everything that exists, exists exclusively for the subject; the subject is the essential correlative of all representations. *Objects* (or phenomena) can be of *four* main kinds (to be described below), but all have in common that they are *knowledge for a subject*: “*all our representations are objects of the subject, and all objects of the subject are our representations*”⁶ Hence, subject and object- *the most fundamental epistemological*

¹ Throughout this essay the terms “noumenal world” (plural: “noumena”) and “thing-in-itself” should be understood as synonyms. I will limit my use of the former to discussions on Kant, as Schopenhauer eschews this term and only utilises the later.

² Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *The World as Will and Representation*, E.F.J. Payne (trans.), Volume 2, p. 191.

³ As the reader will gather the terms “object” and “representation” are greatly synonymous, if not identical. The later term, as far as I am aware, is only distinguished from the former by virtue of its being defined as, and entailing, a “*physiological* occurrence”.

⁴ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 2, p. 191

⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume 1, p. 5

⁶ Schopenhauer, A. (1974) *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, E.F.J. Payne (trans.), La Salle, IL: Open Court, pp. 41-42

distinction for Schopenhauer- are inseparable: they *mutually entail each other*; there is “No object without a subject”⁷. Thus “being subject means exactly the same as having an object, and being object means just the same as being known by the subject”⁸ These definitions will now be supplemented by an understanding of Schopenhauer’s thought with respect to the *principle of sufficient reason*.

1.3 On the Fourfold Root of The Principle of Sufficient Reason

Schopenhauer contends that for a proper appreciation of his philosophy- and his theory of will is most central to it- one must firstly understand the material contained in his essay *On the Fourfold Root of The Principle of Sufficient Reason*. Indeed, in the preface to his chief work, *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer propounds that “the subject matter of that essay is always presupposed here as if it were included in the book”⁹ The subject matter of this essay also presupposes a general- not exhaustive- understanding of this text.

On the Fourfold Root of The Principle of Sufficient Reason, Schopenhauer’s 1813 doctoral dissertation, serves fundamentally as a propaedeutic; a “treatise on elementary philosophy”¹⁰ in which he undertakes a revised epistemology. It can also be viewed as an exposition of Schopenhauer’s idealism; his comprehension of the world as being wholly representative in nature. Now generally understood the PSR states that *for every fact or truth, there exists a sufficient reason why it is the case*.¹¹ Schopenhauer expresses this general understanding through his espousal of Christian Wolff’s (1679-1754) declaration that “Nothing is without a ground why it is rather than it is not”¹², and argues that this principle is known *a priori* and is foundational to *all* thought and knowledge: “the mother of all sciences”¹³. Albeit stipulating that all facts or truth are explainable, the principle *itself is*

⁷ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 434

⁸ Schopenhauer, A. (1974) *FR*, p. 209

⁹ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. xiv

¹⁰ Schopenhauer, A. (1974) *FR*, p. xxvi

¹¹ Bunnin, N., and Yu, J. (2004) *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, p. 668

¹² Schopenhauer, A. (1974) *FR*, p. 6

¹³ *Ibid.*

unprovable; it “explains things in reference to one another, but it always leaves unexplained something that it presupposes.”¹⁴

Now in this work Schopenhauer asserts that the universe contains, or there exists, only *four classes of objects* for our cognitive faculty, all of which are *representations*. Corresponding to these four classes of objects, there are *four classes of explanation*. Each class of object is governed by a distinct class of explanation (or unique form, or ‘root’, of the PSR), and a proper explanation of objects precludes the various modes of explanation being admixed. At the *general root, the base*, of the PSR, is the subject and object division treated off above. It is general in the sense that it *is common to all classes of objects* (and all modes of explanation).

Material objects (natural objects in time and space i.e. trees, tables, etc.) (“*intuitive, perceptive, complete, empirical, representations*”¹⁵) are governed by the *law of causality* (The Principle of Sufficient Reason of *Becoming*). Specifically, the law of causality pertains to *changes* in material objects. The faculty of mind working here is *the understanding*. *Concepts or abstract representations*, which when joined together constitute *judgements*, are understood through *logical explanation* (The Principle of Sufficient Reason of *Knowing*). The faculty of mind functioning here is the *faculty of reason* (the faculty exclusive to human cognition). A judgement constitutes true knowledge only if it is grounded upon something else, i.e. another judgement, a law of logic etc. Space and time, both *a priori* intuitions, constitute *mathematical objects* (space constitutes the foundation of geometry, and time, that of arithmetic), and are governed by *mathematical explanation (geometrical demonstration)* (The Principle of Sufficient Reason of *Being*). The faculty of mind effective here is known as *pure sensibility*. Finally, *individual wills* (“*the subject of willing*”¹⁶), the most pertinent class of objects with respect to this paper, are explained through *the law of motivation* (The Principle of Sufficient Reason of *Acting*). Any action performed by an individual is to be understood *in terms of a motive*, thus motivation equates to “*causality seen from within*”¹⁷ The faculty of mind operative here is *self-consciousness*. The individual

¹⁴ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 81

¹⁵ Schopenhauer, A. (1974) *FR*, p. 45

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 207

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 214

will “is given only in time not in space”¹⁸ A diagrammatic representation of Schopenhauer’s principle can be expressed thus:

<u>Object</u>	<u>Root</u>	<u>Faculty/Subjective Correlate</u>
1. Material objects	The Principle of Sufficient Reason of Becoming (The Law of Causality)	Understanding
2. Concepts (abstract representations)	The Principle of Sufficient Reason of Knowing	Reason
3. Space and time	The Principle of Sufficient Reason of Being	Pure Sensibility
4. Individual wills	The Principle of Sufficient Reason of Acting (The Law of Motivation)	Self-consciousness

Figure 1:

The PSR

1.4 The world as representation

Schopenhauer starts his magnum opus, *The World as Will and Representation*, with the intrepid declaration “The world is my representation”¹⁹ He regards this as an apodictic truth which pertains “to every living and knowing being, although man alone can bring it into reflective abstractive consciousness”²⁰ His understanding of the world as being a representation, only a mere *appearance* of reality, has its genesis predominately in *three* sources: the *Upanishads*, and the doctrines of his two philosophical heroes’, *Plato* (approx. 427-347 B.C.) and *Immanuel Kant* (1724-1804). Indeed, he concedes: “I do not believe my doctrine could have come about before the Upanishads, Plato and Kant could cast their rays simultaneously into the mind of one man”²¹ In postulating the world as a representation, Schopenhauer denounces realism²² and espouses a radical form of idealism known as *subjective or dogmatic idealism*²³. This form of idealism promulgates that the external

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 207

¹⁹ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 3

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Schopenhauer, A. (1988) (ed. Arthur Hübscher) *Manuscript Remains in Four Volumes*, E.F.J. Payne (trans.), *Volume 1: Early Manuscripts (1804-1818)*, Oxford, Berg Publishing, p. 467

²² Realism should be understood here as the conviction that *the external world exists independently of the subject*.

²³ Distinguished from *sceptical idealism*, (as propounded by Rene Descartes (1596-1650)), *objective idealism*, *Absolute Idealism* (based on ‘the absolute’) etc., but most predominately from *partial idealism*. This form of idealism, which Schopenhauer relates predominately to John Locke (1632-1704), regards only *secondary qualities* of an object (taste, sound, colours etc.) as residing within the mind. *Dogmatic, subjective idealism* regards both secondary and *primary qualities* (weight mass, temporality, and spatial extension) as existing

objective world of common sense containing spatio-temporal objects (objects of the *first class of representations*) such as trees, roads, mountains, etc., known to us through intuitive perception, *has no existence independent of us, the human subject*. It has the *ontological status of a dream* and is *purely phenomenal* in nature.²⁴ It is merely a *world of knowledge (or cognition)*. Furthermore, our *understanding and coherent organization* of it is solely *contingent upon us*, the perceivers. And if the subject of perception ceases to exist, so does the external world. The Upanishads, a medley of writings from original oral communications that constitute the staple teachings of Hinduism, regards the everyday external world of common sense also as phantasmic- the *Veil of Maya*. Plato, in his famous allegory of the cave, propounds that the external world represents a mere shadow of something substantive beyond it. Kant, himself greatly influenced (initially) by George Berkeley²⁵ (1685-1753), whose idealism is exemplified in his celebrated statement ‘to be is to be perceived’, is arguably the greatest of Schopenhauer’s influences pertaining to the external world’s chimerical quality. Schopenhauer states: “*Kant’s greatest merit was the distinction of the phenomenon from the thing in itself*”²⁶, and, by way of *construing and equating Kant’s transcendental idealism with dogmatic, Berkeleyan idealism*, he cites Kant’s statement in the first edition of the *Critique Of Pure Reason*²⁷, that “if I remove the thinking subject the whole corporeal world must at once vanish: it is nothing save an appearance in the sensibility of our subject and a mode of its representation”²⁸ Schopenhauer’s adherence to Kant’s transcendental idealism is due to the *fundamental distinction it makes between phenomena and noumena*.²⁹ Additionally, Kant, Schopenhauer opines, correctly demonstrates that the external world is conditioned by, and thus organized into intelligible data by *a priori* cognitive faculties and ‘forms of sensibility’ such as time, space and

exclusively in the mind. There is some conjecture with regards to Schopenhauer’s particular brand of idealism; however that is beyond the scope of this essay.

²⁴ White, F.C. (1992) *On Schopenhauer’s Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, p. 1

²⁵ Albeit Kant, in the *second edition* of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, wrote a section called *Refutation of Idealism*. In it he critiques Berkeley with regards to his dogmatic idealism, and thus distances his ‘transcendental idealism’ from it (and also Descartes sceptical idealism).

²⁶ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 417

²⁷ Schopenhauer contends that, in the second edition of this work, Kant departed from his authentic, Berkeleyan, stance on idealism. Due to this, he opines, this edition vitiated his original insights and was contradictory.

²⁸ Kant, I. (2003) *The Critique of Pure Reason*, J.M.D. Meiklejohn (trans.), New York, Dover Publications, Inc., p.354

²⁹ Cartwright, D.E. (2005) *Historical Dictionary of Schopenhauer’s Philosophy*, Lanham: Maryland, Scarecrow Press, p. 42.

causality. In fact Kant proposes that, in addition to the two forms of sensibility- time and space- there exists twelve conceptual forms- all derived from Aristotelian logic- that constitutes and facilitates human understanding (see section 2.1 Preliminary remarks on Kant's pure forms of intuition and pure concepts of the understanding); however Schopenhauer spurns all of these forms except causality. According to Schopenhauer, *a priori* cognitive apparatus (space, time, and causality) are imposed on the raw sensations we experience. Sensation is subsumed, as such, by the understanding, which engenders perceptual knowledge. Sensation, taken alone, produces no knowledge. Now such cognitive apparatus, acting as the formulating categories of our mind, exist *wholly within the mind*: they exist *a priori*, and are consequently *transcendental* in nature. This view is initially expressed in *On the Fourfold Root of The Principle of Sufficient Reason*: the external world, and all objects therein, are governed by the law of causality, time and space, and that these *a priori* and transcendental truths constitute the "mother's milk of the human understanding"³⁰. There is no reality that parallels to the world which we think we know. It is in fact our own minds that give it the shape and quality that it has. In short, the objective phenomenal world has no existence independent of the subject, but rather, "its existence hangs...on a single thread; and this thread is the actual consciousness in which it exists"³¹

³⁰ Schopenhauer, A. (1974) *FR*, p. 56.

³¹ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 2, pp. 3-4

CHAPTER 2

The will

Schopenhauer's formulation of the world as will proved exceptionally innovative, and has been the most contentious of his theories. Before considering his theory of the will, and his resolute conviction that it constitutes the *thing-in-itself*, it is important to look at its chief conceptual antecedent: the *Kantian thing-in-itself*. This is prudent, since Schopenhauer's will qua the thing-in-itself, can only be understood, to a great extent, in light of its relationship to Kant's thing-in-itself.

2.1 Preliminary remarks on Kant's pure forms of intuition and pure concepts of the understanding

Kant asserts that the *pure forms of intuition, space and time*, are requisite conditions of *experience*, and, sans these, phenomenal objects cannot be *known*. We can only be cognizant of objects if they are offered to us in a spatio-temporal form. Thus these pure forms of sensibility ineludibly govern all perception. *The pure concepts of the understanding, the twelve conceptual categories*, are conditions of the *possibility of experience*. Save these an object cannot be *thought*. Kant believes that both the pure concepts of the understanding and the pure forms of intuition are the essential constituents of experience, and are both given *a priori* (as opposed to being concepts derived from experience). Human knowledge is *restricted by these subjective conditions*, and consequently is circumscribed to *possible objects of experience, or 'mere appearances'*. It is impossible to construct any positive conclusions pertaining to what is beyond possible experience.³² As a consequence, knowledge claims on the *nature* of non-empirical reality are bereft of any meaning.

2.2 The Kantian thing-in-itself

As we have seen, Kant makes a foundational distinction (one which Schopenhauer holds in reverie) between the *thing-in-itself (the noumenon)* and the world as *perceived by our senses (phenomenal world)*. According to Kant, the thing-in-itself is the *object of sensuous*

³² Gardiner, P. (1963) *Schopenhauer*, Great Britain, Pelican Books, p. 42

perception that exists independently of being perceived, and was founded upon the supposition that *there must be some substance behind perceptual phenomena*. Specifically, it was founded on a *deduction* from the *law of causality*: sensations require an external cause in order for them to exist. For Kant “it would be absurd to admit no things in themselves”³³ Now we can never perceive independent objects directly, as they cannot be presented to us in our experience. Thus we can only know them *circuitously* i.e. as a result of their *effect* on the objects given in experience. Clearly, for Kant, the thing-in-itself cannot be experienced. Indeed, all that can be known about the thing-in-itself is that it is *unknowable*. We cannot transcend the subjective conditions (our cognitive apparatus) of the possibility of our experience to know anything other than the phenomenal world: “what things may be in themselves, I know not, and need not know because a thing is never presented to me otherwise than as a phenomenon.”³⁴ Rather, according to Kant, what we *can* think and know are *transcendental objects*³⁵, which are *conceptual correlates of representations* (as opposed to real phenomenal objects). These correlates essentially ‘designate’ the thing-in-itself. As an example, when we perceive a chair, and apprehend it as the appearance of an undetectable reality, we see this chair as the *transcendent chair*. As such, it is the imperceptible ‘in-itself’ that *engenders the perception of the chair*.

Kant’s *a fortiori* conception of the-thing-in-itself allows phenomenal objects, and therefore perceptual apprehension, to possess concrete reality. He logically concludes that if phenomena are devoid of a thing-in-itself they would have no existence beyond a merely empirical one. However, therein lays a gross paradox: *to possess concrete reality, objects of empirical experience must be contingent on that which is unknowable and unprovable*. As such, the thing-in-itself, for Kant, can only be used *negatively* to *denote the limit of all possible knowledge* and, for him at least, testifies that such knowledge is objectively genuine.³⁶

³³ Kant, I. (2004) (ed. Gunter Zoller), *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, US, Oxford University Press, p. 117

³⁴ Kant, I. (2003) *The Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 165

³⁵ In the first edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant uses the terms noumenon and thing-in-itself as synonyms for transcendental object.

³⁶ Scruton, R. (1987) *Kant*, Great Britain, Oxford University Press, p. 42

2.3 Schopenhauer's critique of Kant

Now Schopenhauer rebukes many of the above Kantian views. Although he greatly approves of Kant's ideality of space and time, and that, along with causality, these render experience possible, he deems that eleven of the twelve pure concepts of the understanding are superfluous (i.e. they provided no foundation for any representation to be known): for him, *only* space, time, and the law of causality are necessary conditions of perceptual experience. Furthermore, he argues, Kant confuses intuitive knowledge (belonging to the *faculty of understanding*) from abstract knowledge (belonging to the *faculty of reason*), and, as a consequence, became "implicated in inextricable contradictions with himself"³⁷ For Schopenhauer, abstract knowledge is the sole province of the faculty of reason, and intuitive knowledge that of the faculty of understanding.³⁸ Schopenhauer also vehemently refutes Kant's ill-grounded assertion that the *thing-in-itself causes our sensations*: "Kant bases the assumption of the thing-in-itself...on a conclusion according to the law of causality, namely that empirical perception, or more correctly *sensation* in our organs of sense from which it proceeds, must have an external cause."³⁹ However, as we have seen, the law of causality only pertains to phenomenal objects of empirical perception (or possible empirical experience), and the thing-in-itself is completely foreign to such objects: "...the whole of empirical perception remains throughout on a subjective foundation, as a mere occurrence in us, and nothing entirely different from and independent of it can be brought in as a *thing-in-itself*, or shown to be a necessary assumption."⁴⁰

Schopenhauer further censures Kant for positing the thing-in-itself as an *object* (causality applies only to objects)⁴¹. As the thing-in-itself is thoroughly dissimilar from phenomena it cannot be an object for a subject.⁴² Congruent with his view that *meaningful* concepts can only be derived from intuitive empirical perception, he also dispenses with the validity of transcendent objects.

³⁷ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 431

³⁸ Hamlyn, D. W. (1980) *Schopenhauer: The Arguments of the Philosophers*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, p. 44

³⁹ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 436

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Schopenhauer initially rejected the concept of the thing-in-itself since it presupposed an object outside of consciousness.

⁴² Wicks, R. (2011) *Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Representation: A Reader's Guide*, p. 29

2.4 The will as body

Schopenhauer, like Kant, also desired to find an indubitable foundation for the phenomenal world; an explication as to what this world *actually is- the inner substance that lay behind, and accounts for, all appearance*. He sought to “know the significance of...representations”⁴³ and questioned “whether this world is nothing more than representation”⁴⁴ If so, “it would inevitably pass by us like an empty dream, or a ghostly vision not worth our consideration.”⁴⁵ For Schopenhauer, the sciences, albeit affording us with *practical knowledge*, cannot yield such a foundation. They impart knowledge that is exclusively about the phenomenal world and objects therein. Even after its multifarious explanations, science cannot tell us if this world is anything other than a phantasmagoria wholly conjured up by the subject; thus phenomena “still stand quite strange before us as mere representations whose significance we do not understand”⁴⁶ . Without a staunch metaphysical underpinning, science remains shallow. Specifically, it constitutes an ‘*outside*’, *external analysis* of the world, and “we can never get at the inner nature of things *from without*”⁴⁷ Thus, in the hope of understanding the inner nature of the world, Schopenhauer moves his attention away from intuitive perception- away from all *outer experience*- and towards *self-consciousness* and *inner experience*. Our body, like all other objects in the world of phenomena, is a representation - the *immediate object*- and, as such, we understand it, and its behaviour, as we do all other representations:

For the purely knowing subject as such, this body is a representation like any other, an object among objects. Its movements and actions are so far known to him in just the same way as the changes of all other objects of perception...⁴⁸

However, it is not *only* a representation in the phenomenal world “consequently...liable to the laws of this objective corporeal world”⁴⁹, but, additionally, it is *that in which I experience myself*. It is this body which furnishes us with an ‘*inside sentience*’, or *phenomenological awareness*, of the will:

⁴³ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 98

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 98

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 99

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Schopenhauer, A. (1974) *FR*, p. 124

... a way *from within* stands open to us as 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.⁵⁰

Dissimilar to all other representations I experience my body in a unique way. As I am writing these words on my keyboard I am aware of predominately three representations. One is the keyboard, the second is the computer screen, and the third is my hand with which I have my fingers typing. Now I cannot experience the keyboard or computer screen as I can my hand. I am *inside my hand*, as such. Clearly, I am not inside the keyboard or the computer screen. All three are consubstantial as representations, but I only have *inside knowledge* of my hand. This *self-consciousness* of my hand, with its *conative function*, is its defining feature in making it *my hand*. If I did not possess this *inside awareness/knowledge* of it being *my hand*, it would not be *my hand*. Rather it would only be another representation (i.e. the keyboard or computer screen) within my perceptual field.⁵¹

This and this alone gives him the key to his own phenomenon, reveals to him the significance and shows him the inner mechanism of his being, his actions, his movements. 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 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 everyone, and is denoted by the word *will*.⁵²

The body, as an *objectification of the will*, literally renders the will perceptible as a *representation*: “will that has become representation”⁵³. All actions of the body, both voluntary (movement engendered by motivation) and involuntary, are nothing save the objectification of the will. The body can be seen, through its *acts of will*, to furnish a *posteriori* knowledge of will, and, conversely, the will can be seen to give us a *priori* knowledge of the *body*. Schopenhauer further states: “Every true, genuine, immediate act of the will is also at once and directly a manifest act of the body...”⁵⁴ A human action as an

⁵⁰ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 2, p. 195

⁵¹ Cartwright, D.E. (2010) *Schopenhauer: A Biography*, New York, Cambridge University Press, p. 303

⁵² Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 100

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101

act of will and as a *bodily act* are inextricably linked: indeed, they are essentially one and the same thing. However, the will does not *cause* either:

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...⁵⁵

The truth of the judgement- 'the will and body are identical'- does not have its underpinning in any other representation (or any expression of the PSR). Rather, its bedrock lies in a *subject's cognizance/apprehension* that there is an *immediate affiliation between his will and body*. As such, 'will and body are identical' constitutes a wholly novel truth for Schopenhauer and must thus be defined in a unique way:

I should therefore like to distinguish this truth from every other, and call it *philosophical truth par excellence*. We can turn the expression of this truth in different ways and say: My body and my will are one; or, What as representation of perception I call my body, I call my will in so far as I am conscious of it in an entirely different way comparable with no other; or, My body is the objectivity of my will; or, Apart from the fact that my body is my representation, it is still my will, and so on.⁵⁶

It is imperative to note that individual *acts of will (inner knowledge) are not known in the same way as intuitive perceptual objects are known (outer knowledge)*. The latter, as demonstrated, are only known as *sensory objects* conditioned by space, time and causality. However, acts of will, being known through *self-consciousness*, are only *conditioned temporally* i.e. we know our acts of will as temporal objects succeeding one another in time.

2.5 The will as the thing-in-itself

Schopenhauer's theory of will *as the thing-in-itself* has its bedrock in a *subject's comprehension of his own will*: what will is for a human subject is fundamentally what will, as a metaphysical principle, is for the world. Now, in identifying the thing-in-itself as will,

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 100

⁵⁶ Ibid., Volume 1, pp. 102-103

Schopenhauer notes that in order to *be understood objectively*, the thing-in-itself must “borrow its name and concept from an object”⁵⁷ (however, as noted, the thing-in-itself is *not* an object) Schopenhauer admonishes us not to apprehend the word ‘will’ in its regular sense (as only applicable to human subjects). He uses the term ‘will’, purely because *will is most lucidly objectified in the human subject*, being “the most distinct phenomenon or appearance of the will”⁵⁸ However, will embodies not only the inner nature of plants, stones, animals, etc. but is “the innermost essence of everything in nature”⁵⁹ Noting that the concept of will has been subsumed previously under the concept of ‘force’, Schopenhauer makes a clear demarcation between ‘will’ and ‘force’. At the base of the concept of force, like all other concepts, lies knowledge of the world of perceptual experience. However, the will eludes the world of perceptual experience and is thus *the non-representational essence of all representation*:

But only the *will is thing-in-itself*; as such it is not representation at all, but *toto genere* different therefrom. It is that of which all representation, all object, is the phenomenon, the visibility, the *objectivity*. It is the innermost essence, the kernel, of every particular thing and also of the whole. It appears in every blindly acting force of nature, and also in the deliberate conduct of man...⁶⁰

The will as the thing-in-itself is “groundless”: it has no *cause* or *reason* for its existence. It is a hypostatic ‘one’: the “one and indivisible will”⁶¹ Plurality, arising through time and space—what Schopenhauer terms the *principium individuationis*—, belongs exclusively to the objective phenomenal world governed by the PSR. The will is “outside the province of the principle of sufficient reason in all its forms”⁶²; the phenomena of the objective world are mere *manifestations* of it. In defining it as ‘one’, Schopenhauer notes that this ‘one’ is not a *conceptual ‘one’*, for the conceptual ‘one’ assumes relations to other objects in time and space (i.e. there could not be a ‘one’, without a ‘two’, a ‘three’ etc.): “It is itself one, yet not as an object is one, for the unity of an object is known only in contrast to possible

⁵⁷ Ibid., Volume 1, p. 110

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 111

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 110

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 138

⁶² Ibid., p. 113

plurality”⁶³ In its capacity as being ‘one’, the will is *the indivisible and identical reality that underlies all of its various manifestations*.

...it is not one as an individual or a concept is, but as something to which the conditions of the possibility of plurality, that is, the *principium individuationis*, is foreign. 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 indivisible⁶⁴

The inner reality we experience in our body is identical to the inner reality of all other phenomena,⁶⁵ and, as noted, it is due to this fact that Schopenhauer identifies the will with the thing-in-itself. And by such a means of discovery, Schopenhauer eludes Kant’s faulty argument of deduction (from causality to the thing-in-itself).

2.6 The will and the Platonic Ideas

Now the will *expresses, or objectifies*⁶⁶, *itself at certain grades*. This expression is realized by means of phenomenal objects: At these different grades or levels, which are essentially endless, *specific phenomena objectify the will*, some less, some more so⁶⁷. Now the gradations of the will do *not* correspond to the *level* (i.e. *quantity*) of will contained in phenomena (smaller or larger amounts of will, by perforce, assumes necessary spatial relations within it- such relations do not apply to the will) or the *plurality* of such phenomena: “The will reveals itself just as completely and just as much in one oak as in millions”⁶⁸. Rather the objectification of the will pertains to the *visibility or translucence* of it within specific phenomena: “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”⁶⁹ Organic phenomena manifest the will more so than inorganic phenomena, and human animals express it greatest. This hierarchical ontology can be represented thus:

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., Volume 1, p. 128

⁶⁵ Wicks, R. (2011) *Schopenhauer’s The World as Will and Representation: A Reader’s Guide*, p. 72

⁶⁶ ‘Expresses’, ‘objectified’ and ‘manifested’ should be understood as synonyms here.

⁶⁷ Hamlyn, D. W. (1980) *Schopenhauer: The Arguments of the Philosophers*, p. 104

⁶⁸ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 128

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Inorganic phenomena→ Organic phenomena→ Conscious Beings

Natural forces→Stone→Plant→Animal→Human
 (*Levels of Objectification of the Will: Low→High*)

Now Platonic Ideas embody that which is eternal and vital in the specific object perceived, and are affected neither by “plurality nor change”⁷⁰. They are “the original unchanging forms and properties of all natural bodies, whether organic or inorganic, as well as the universal forces that reveal themselves according to natural laws”⁷¹ For example, with regards to a *particular* oak tree, an inadequate and ephemeral *copy* of the *eternal archetype*, the spatial and temporal location of it is inconsequential to that tree’s ‘oakness’. The *universal object*, that of the trees ‘oakness’, is the will’s *immediate objectification* from which all oak trees have their character. Although countless oak trees come into, and pass out of, existence, the *idea* of ‘oakness’ is eternal. This can be extended to *all* objects in the phenomenal world. These universal objects bring us nearer to metaphysical truth, i.e. the thing-in-itself.⁷²

Now *Platonic Ideas*, corresponding to *all* the grades of the wills objectification, and acting as the *immediate objectification*, or *first grade*, of the will (at a specific grade), have a clear relationship to the will *qua the thing-in-itself*: “...the will is the *thing-in-itself*, and the *Idea* is the immediate objectivity of that will at a definite grade...”⁷³ At this definite grade, the will *qua the thing-in-itself*, first adopts the fundamental form of representation: being an *object for a subject* (a Platonic Idea). The Ideas, *subordinated to the PSR*, subsequently adopt additional subsidiary forms of appearance- time, space, and causality. They are consequently increased by these forms⁷⁴ into “particular and fleeting individuals, whose number in respect to the Idea is a matter of complete indifference”⁷⁵ Thus the PSR is “the form into which the Idea enters, since the Idea comes into the knowledge of the subject as individual”⁷⁶ Platonic Ideas are the only “adequate, objectivity of the thing-in-itself, which is

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 169

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Wicks, R. (2011) *Schopenhauer’s The World as Will and Representation: A Reader’s Guide*, p. 73.

⁷³ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 170

⁷⁴ Atwell, J. E. (1995) *Schopenhauer on the Character of the World: The Metaphysics of Will*, Berkeley, University of California Press, p. 136

⁷⁵ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 175

⁷⁶ Ibid

will- will insofar as it is not yet objectified, has not yet become representation”⁷⁷ By this Schopenhauer maintains that the will is *not an object*, but can be *objectified adequately by means of the Ideas*, whilst *inadequately*, through the *particular phenomenal objects in the objective world*. The Idea, cognized by a subject, is *necessarily dissimilar to the will*: “the Platonic Idea is necessarily object, something known, a representation...”⁷⁸ Ontologically, the Platonic Ideas, as such, are stationed between the will and the particular objects of the phenomenal world. However, there are certain problems in Schopenhauer’s conception and treatment of the Ideas which I shall fully address in Chapter 3.

2.7 The will and Schopenhauer’s pessimism

As demonstrated, the will is a universal metaphysical principle. It is ‘blind’, has no “final goal”⁷⁹, and is bereft of “all aim, of all limits”⁸⁰. It is simply *the raw will-to-live*⁸¹ common to, and imbued in, all phenomena: “Everything presses and pushes towards *existence*...”⁸²

Owing to the nature of the will- or most precisely the natural human proclivity to *affirm it*⁸³, the world, for all sentient beings⁸⁴, is an irrational and pointless battlefield replete with suffering. This is due to the fact that *the character of the will- a restless, endless, urge and blind striving- is paralleled in our own individual wills* (or characters⁸⁵). It is manifested in us most lucidly as *instinct, impulse, and craving*, and we are defined, subsumed, and circumscribed by it. Our *everyday, subjective consciousness* is inexorably linked to our individual will, which represents the world around us in an *egocentric* fashion. As such,

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 174

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 175

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 164

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ I use the ‘will-to-live’ and ‘will’/‘the will’ as synonyms, as Schopenhauer himself does. He regards the former a pleonasm.

⁸² Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 2, p. 350

⁸³ ‘Will’ and ‘affirmation of will’ are synonymous. As demonstrated later, the negation of will constitutes its annihilation.

⁸⁴ My discussion pertains predominately to human beings here.

⁸⁵ Schopenhauer makes a division between the empirical, intelligible, and acquired character. Briefly, the *empirical character* is the character which is manifest in space and time. It is subservient to the PSR and is the *phenomenal appearance of the intelligible character*. The *intelligible character* is the objectification of the will at a specific grade. As such it exists outside time and space, is fixed and universal. A person’s body is the expression of his intelligible character, which is the *fundamental act of will* that the person is. The *acquired character* entails complete knowledge of one’s own individuality. It is the capacity for one to rationally and deliberately live life in congruence with the fundamental dispositions of one’s intelligible character. As such, it necessitates exact knowledge of one’s empirical character and knowledge of the world. It is *not* unalterable or consistent throughout time.

external objects of perception are only seen *in relation to the utility they hold for us* i.e. how they expediate and facilitate our way through the world. They are not seen for their own intrinsic values or qualities. Our everyday cognition is wholly subordinated to the will in this *instrumental* nature, and this precludes objects of perception being discerned as they simply are, as their *being*, per se. In our world, we- the *knowing subject*-, are the focal point; we are the 'centre' of the universe: "there is in the case of knowing beings the fact that the individual is the bearer of the knowing subject, and this knowing subject is the bearer of the world"⁸⁶. The function of the will in this egocentric capacity is patently prejudicial to happiness, inducing incessant misery and solicitude: "so long as we are the subject of willing, we never obtain lasting happiness or peace"⁸⁷ Willing, having its aetiology in a restless deficiency- an inherent sense of privation or indeterminate longing- never terminates. At best, we only enjoy transient respites from it when the object(s) of our willing is/are attained. However, even the realization of the object(s) of our willing brings an inevitably ephemeral fulfilment, and we are then, forthwith, usurped by boredom or novel desire(s). Furthermore, our desire(s) last long in duration, and, if and when satiated, leave a plethora frustrated:

All willing springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering. Fulfilment brings this to an end; yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied. Further, desiring lasts a long time, demands and requests go on to infinity; fulfilment is short and meted out sparingly. But even the final satisfaction itself is only apparent; the wish fulfilled at once makes way for a new one; the former is a known delusion, the latter a delusion not as yet known.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1 p. 332

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 196

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

2.8 The will in Schopenhauer's aesthetics and ethics

Now Schopenhauer asserts that this grim and violent spatiotemporal world *can* be transcended. We *can* find temporary respite, and eventually, lasting salvation from it. To yield such respite, one's everyday instrumental consciousness must be renounced in favour of embracing *universal, less-individuated, and 'will-less'* modes of perception. Such 'will-less' *disinterested* modes of perception allow for a *withdrawal from*, or a *negation of*, the will. When adopted, they result in emancipation *from the will*. In this consciousness, which I shall henceforth call *objective consciousness*, one ceases apprehending the world egocentrically and views objects of perception as they actually are *in themselves*. Phenomenal objects thus no longer bear any relation to one's instrumental will.

Now for Schopenhauer emancipation from the will can occur in either of *three* ways: firstly through *aesthetic contemplation*, or, secondly, through what he terms '*moral awareness*', or, finally, through the *ascetic renunciation of one's corporeal desires*.⁹⁴ Aesthetic contemplation and moral awareness entail *withdrawal* from the individual will, and thus only provide *transitory* respites from will-induced suffering, whilst asceticism seeks the *abolishment of the will* and is the catalyst for lasting salvation. I shall now address these three ways respectively, whilst emphasizing their relationship to the will.

2.8.1 Aesthetic contemplation

Schopenhauer describes the individual who has achieved aesthetic experience as the "pure subject of knowing."⁹⁵ The individual's intellect is 'pure' by virtue of the fact that it has been *extricated from its subservience to the demands of the will*. Perception is thus no longer subordinated to the PSR, rather the subject now apprehends the *Platonic Ideas*. The transcendence of the *particular object* through aesthetic contemplation gives one access to the *universal Idea*, and, for Schopenhauer, it is this that constitutes *transcendental knowledge*.

...what kind of knowledge is it that considers what continues to exist outside and independently of all relations, but which alone is really essential to the world, the true

⁹⁴ Foster, C. *Ideas and Imagination*, in Janaway, C. (Ed.) (1999) *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, UK, Cambridge University Press, p. 217

⁹⁵ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 234

content of its phenomena, that which is subject to no change, and is therefore known with equal truth for all time, in a word, the *Ideas* that are the immediate and adequate objectivity of the thing-in-itself, of the will? It is *art*, the work of genius. It repeats the eternal Ideas apprehended through pure contemplation, the essential and abiding element in all the phenomena of the world.⁹⁶

In such apprehension, the mind becomes devoted to 'will-less' perception as the *subject fuses with the object*. Thus:

...we lose ourselves entirely in this object...we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject...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 the entire consciousness is filled and occupied by a single image of perception⁹⁷

Evidently, for aesthetic contemplation of art or nature to occur, there must exist two inextricable parts: *one* being "the self-consciousness of the knower...as *pure, will-less subject of knowledge*"⁹⁸ and, *the second*, being "knowledge of the object...as Platonic *Idea*"⁹⁹.

Aesthetic experience is realized specifically through the contemplation of nature and the works of *fine arts*: those of architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry and music. Now, as demonstrated earlier, specific phenomena objectify the will at different gradations, and Platonic Ideas, serve as the "adequate" objectification of the will at these different gradations. Correspondingly, the *specific arts* themselves form a hierarchical ontology:

Architecture→Sculpture→Painting→Poetry→Music
(Levels of Objectification of the Will: Low→High)

Particular ideas form the objects of particular arts. Architecture, for example, expresses the Ideas of the inorganic world i.e. firmness and gravity. Poetry, being near the summit, expresses, in the most apposite way, the multifaceted Idea of humanity¹⁰⁰ Music is demarcated from the other arts, by virtue of the fact that it is the paramount metaphysical art and exists on a *subjective, feeling-centred plane with the Platonic Ideas themselves*. It is

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 184

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 178-179

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 195

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Wicks, R. (2011) *Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Representation: A Reader's Guide*, p. 15

not representational of anything in the phenomenal world, but rather a “copy of the will itself”¹⁰¹. Platonic Ideas comprise the patterns for the sorts of objects in the phenomenal world; however, *music replicates the fundamental structure of the world*.

...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 powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence.¹⁰²

The low bass notes are analogous to inorganic nature, i.e. the “lowest grades of the will’s objectification”¹⁰³ The harmonies parallel the animal world, and the melodies parallel the human world. Melody, for Schopenhauer, constitutes “the highest grade of the will’s objectification, the intellectual life and endeavour of man”¹⁰⁴ which “relates the most secret history of the intellectually enlightened will, portrays every agitation, every effort, every movement of the will...”¹⁰⁵

2.8.2 Moral awareness

Emancipation from the will can also occur through practicing *moral awareness*. The feeling of *empathy*¹⁰⁶ is foundational to moral awareness¹⁰⁷: “only insofar as an action issues from empathy, does it have any moral worth”¹⁰⁸ Understanding moral awareness entails a comprehension of the will as being, at base, metaphysically monistic in nature: it purports that once we see each other as *instantiations of the same metaphysical will*, we will then apprehend that our *individual will is chimerical in its ultimate nature*. All moral behaviour “must issue from the intuitive knowledge that recognizes in someone else’s individuality, the very same being as one’s own”¹⁰⁹ As the same metaphysical will is common to us all, dissimilarities between our individual characters are ultimately insignificant; thus this

¹⁰¹ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 257

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 258

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 259

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Schopenhauer uses the German word *Mitleid*. ‘Empathy’ and ‘compassion’ are equivalent English terms.

¹⁰⁷ Wicks, R. (2008) *Schopenhauer*, Oxford, UK, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, p. 114

¹⁰⁸ Schopenhauer, A. (1965) *On the Basis of Morality*, E.F.J. Payne (trans.), Indianapolis and New York, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., p. 144

¹⁰⁹ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 368

universalistic moral awareness transcends our sense of individuality.¹¹⁰ When the morally aware individual sees in all of his fellow man “his own true and innermost self, [he] must also regard the endless sufferings of all that lives as his own...”¹¹¹ We thus then understand that “the offender and the offended are in themselves one, and that it is the same inner nature which, not recognizing itself in its own phenomenon, bears both the pain and the guilt”¹¹² Fundamentally, the torturer exacts pain on a manifestation of his very own metaphysical substance, and, likewise, the tortured individual subjects guilt only on himself. Conversely, the noble individual aids and has empathy only for himself. In essence, the individuals we help or hinder are only ourselves, and by apprehending, at this universal level, that we all metaphysically consubstantial, we escape egocentric *subject-object cognition* and achieve liberation from the individual will. Our cognition is no longer dictated by the PSR, which has effectively ceased to exist. Consequently, individuation itself ceases to exist.¹¹³ From this, we then cultivate a robust sense of compassion for others, endeavour to alleviate the sufferings of others, and eschew all violence and cruelty. Such moral awareness yields a consciousness that is *sublime*: it produces an equanimity which extricates one from the solicitude and disquiet of individual willing, cast against a dread at the awareness of the great suffering abound in the world.¹¹⁴

2.8.3 Asceticism

Asceticism seeks to wholly negate or *abolish* the individual will. This abolishment is achieved by denying the will of that which it wills for, and necessitates austere self-discipline on behalf of the individual. By placing himself in states of privation, for example “in voluntary and intentional poverty”¹¹⁵, an ascetic effectively negates the will. Subsequently, the *striving of the will remains*, yet, the *fulfilment of what it strives for* is thwarted. For example, when one desires food, they can either fulfil this desire, or, alternatively, abnegate it. Only when one abnegates this desire do they denude the will of its importance, and embrace an ascetic mode of existence. As opposed to aesthetic contemplation and moral

¹¹⁰ Wicks, R. (2008) *Schopenhauer*, p. 122

¹¹¹ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 379

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 357

¹¹³ Wicks, R. (2008) *Schopenhauer*, p. 136

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 134

¹¹⁵ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 381

awareness-both offering only *ephemeral respites* from the egocentric will- asceticism endeavours to *permanently* stultify it. For Schopenhauer, it is thus the optimum way to nullify egocentric willing and attain lasting salvation. One who truly understands his own essence as will, and how willing engenders futile striving and unremitting suffering, will be so nauseated by the human condition, that he will renounce the desire to affirm the will-to-live. This will thus precipitate an ascetic stance of resignation, renunciation, and, most importantly, a *disavowal of the will to live*:

...self-renunciation, of mortification of one's own will, of asceticism, is here for the first time expressed in abstract terms and free from everything mythical, as *denial of the will-to-live*, which appears after the complete knowledge of his own inner being has become for it the quieter of all willing¹¹⁶

This concludes the explicatory section of this thesis. I shall now examine some salient problems with Schopenhauer's theory of will, and additionally look at possible solutions to these.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 383

Chapter 3

Problems with Schopenhauer's theory of will with possible solutions

Schopenhauer's theory of will, albeit original and insightful, has several problems. These shall now be explicated. Additionally, I shall delineate possible solutions to these problems, and subsequently evaluate the validity of these. Certain points covered previously will be reviewed, and, in order to conduce to a comprehensive understanding of these problems, it is necessary that, at times, there be overlap, and repetition, of certain ideas.

3.1 Problems with the word 'will'

The first, and most obvious, problem I wish to address with Schopenhauer's theory of will is his very use of the word "*will*", *qua describing the thing-in-itself*. Now, according to Schopenhauer all *meaningful concepts* are derived from *experience of the phenomenal world*. *Words* are used to express these concepts; they "express universal representations, concepts, never the things of intuitive perception"¹¹⁷ In turn, "concepts borrow their material from knowledge of perception"¹¹⁸ Thus words must clearly derive from, and consequently be linked to, the phenomenal world (albeit not intuitive particulars within it). But the thing-in-itself is *completely foreign to anything in the phenomenal world* and exists *beyond experience*. It is wholly demarcated from the phenomenal world, and a word can only ever *denote something which is derived from, or instantiated in (by means of objects) it*. For Schopenhauer, the will qua the thing-in-itself is, at most, *manifested (objectified) in the phenomenal world*. In his defence, this complaint would have applied to *any* word he had used, and he was clearly sensitive to it:

To answer transcendental questions in language that is made for immanent knowledge must assuredly lead to contradiction¹¹⁹

He *had* to use concepts (all of which having their genesis in phenomenal reality), and language derived therefrom, to explicate that which purportedly surpasses such a reality.

¹¹⁷ Schopenhauer, A. (1974) *FR*, p. 148

¹¹⁸ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 2., p. 71

¹¹⁹ Schopenhauer, A. (2008) *Essays of Schopenhauer*, Mrs Rudolf Dircks (trans.) United Kingdom, Dodo Press, p. 75

We cannot attempt to describe anything other than brain-based phenomena without using ‘stuff’ of the brain, and *all* perceptual experience is ultimately brain based (and regulated). By denoting the thing-in-itself (as defined by Kant) by any means we are thus engaging in paradox: *any* marker we use *has to have some* link to the phenomenal world.

3.2 How can the will be ‘blind’, ‘knowledge-less’ and ‘aimless’?

Schopenhauer’s characterization of the will as ‘blind’, knowledge-less, and aimless engenders many problems, particularly if viewed as empirical fact. Firstly, he contradicts this notion when talking of the *animal kingdom*: “we see at once from the instinct and mechanical skill of animals that the will is also active where it is not guided by any knowledge”¹²⁰. Now, in this capacity- as having instinctual and mechanical skill-, the will can be seen to possess an *aim* (albeit, instinctual skill would entail an *unconscious* aim) and knowledge. And having ‘skill’ clearly presupposes having knowledge. Knowledge is a necessary requisite for skill. Specifically Schopenhauer *equates the will with animal instinct*:

The one year old bird that 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 time¹²¹

He further asserts that, in our observations of animals, “the ingenuity of the means by which each is adapted to its element and to its prey...contrast clearly with the absence of any lasting *final aim*”.¹²² However, the animals’ very existence, and the perpetuation of its particular species, is *itself* the “lasting final aim(s)”.

Analogous to this, the will, as *sexual impulse*-“the most complete manifestation of the Will-to-live”¹²³-clearly has an *aim* in that it exists for the perpetuation of the species. Indeed, *this* constitutes its “lasting final aim”.

Moreover, and underpinning the above problems, the will, in the very capacity that it *is* (manifested as) the “*will-to-live*”, is *not* ‘blind’ and aimless. Indeed, *existence* (specifically as

¹²⁰ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1., p. 114

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*, Volume 2, p. 354 (my italics)

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 514

seen in, but not limited to, organic phenomena) *itself presupposes* the will has an aim: the aim “of all animals and human beings to maintain life and continue it as long as possible”¹²⁴ Other than this, there would be *no will (and no existence)*. How the will can be blind and aimless, yet manifest itself in a world of purposeful and directed activity, is not clear. I suggest that this inconsistency can be (partially) resolved thus: in stating that the will was blind, knowledge-less and aimless Schopenhauer was speaking purely *metaphorically* in order to distinguish the will from a *deity-like* substratum¹²⁵. Likewise, this use of metaphor also vetoed it from being anthropomorphized.

3.3 Ontological and epistemological problems with the will

I shall now address problems pertaining to the wills affiliation with the Kantian thing-in-itself (ontological problems). I will also look at problems in *the way in which it is knowable* (epistemological problems) i.e. its relationship to representation. These are the most profound problems, some of which appear intractable. For means of clarification Schopenhauer’s metaphysical system is revised in the diagram below.

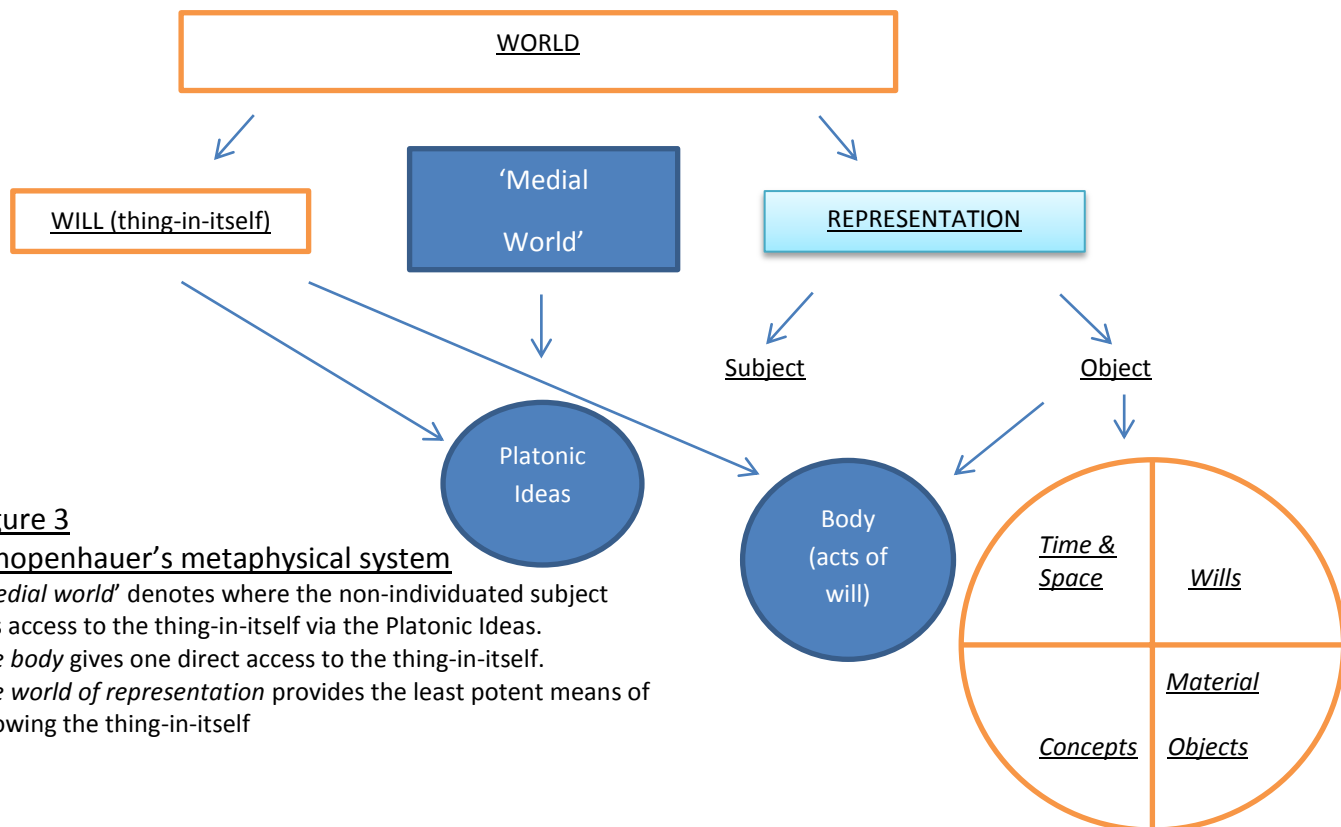


Figure 3

Schopenhauer’s metaphysical system

'Medial world' denotes where the non-individuated subject has access to the thing-in-itself via the Platonic Ideas.

The body gives one direct access to the thing-in-itself.

The world of representation provides the least potent means of knowing the thing-in-itself

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 352

¹²⁵ Specifically, he was contrasting the will with that of Hegel’s (1770–1831) “Absolute”, the latter entailing a deity-like reality.

3.3.1 How can the will be manifested?

Schopenhauer contends that:

1. All representations (objects for the subject) are necessarily conditioned by the PSR (see section 1.2 On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason).
2. The will as thing-in-itself is wholly independent of this principle; it is thus undifferentiated, causeless, timeless and spaceless.
3. (Therefore) will and representation are *wholly (toto genere)* different.

From this, we may validly ask, how, and by what mechanism, can the will be *manifested* in the phenomenal world? I.e. through phenomenal objects such as mountains, trees, tables etc. How can the will, sharing absolutely no properties of representation, possibly be known *through representation*? Indeed, by Schopenhauer's own admissions that "All our representations are objects of the subject, and all objects of the subject are our representations"¹²⁶ and will is "*toto genere* different" from representation, being "that inscrutable metaphysical entity which...Kant calls the "thing-in-itself"¹²⁷ he seems to preclude this possibility. He denies that the manifestation of the will in representation equates to any *relation* (specifically causal) between the two, save for a *metaphorical or expressive* one; relations only ever subsist between the four different classes of representations¹²⁸:

The relation of the will to the representation ...is *toto genere* different from all the relations of representations, in other words it is not in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason¹²⁹

One way to overcome this difficulty is as follows¹³⁰: Schopenhauer claims the will is literally *everything*; it constitutes the *totality of existence*. Therefore, representation is not, and cannot be, fundamentally different from will; both are essentially *two sides of the same*

¹²⁶ Schopenhauer, A. (1974) *FR*, pp. 41-42

¹²⁷ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. vii

¹²⁸ As we have seen Schopenhauer censures Kant for postulating that a relationship subsists between the thing-in-itself and phenomena i.e. Kant deeming that the former causes the latter.

¹²⁹ Schopenhauer, A. (1988) *Manuscript Remains in Four Volumes, Volume 1: Early Manuscripts (1804-1818)*, p. 384

¹³⁰ As proposed by the late Schopenhauer scholar John Atwell. I shall henceforth term this "Atwell's solution".

coin. Representation is not a *distinct substance*; it is merely “the mirror of the will”¹³¹, and, as such, they cannot have any *relation* to each other: specifically *neither* can cause *either*. The will rests on an ‘infinite continuum’, and representation merely constitutes a *continuance* of will at different grades on this continuum. Representation is only *relative* to the *absolute* will. It is simply *will that has become object*, and such a *transmutation* does not entail a *changing of substance*¹³² This commensuration between will and representation is paralleled in the commensuration between *voluntary bodily movements* and *acts of will* (see section 2.4 The Will as body). However, the (notable) exception¹³³ to this correspondence is that acts of will are *conditioned temporarily*, whilst will qua the thing-in-itself is *entirely unconditioned*.

Now I feel this solution itself leaves us with difficulties, perhaps as profound as the specific one it attempts to solve. Most superficially, Schopenhauer’s dual aspect ontology is rendered redundant. There are not two aspects of reality, only one, namely will. Nonetheless, this particular difficulty can *prima facie* easily be refuted in proposing that Schopenhauer’s ontology only entails a duality in the sense that there exists not two different substances in reality, but *two ways of viewing the same substance*, i.e. will. However, this viewpoint disregards the fact that Schopenhauer’s (albeit contradictory) demarcation of two general types of possible knowledge, i.e. knowledge of the *will*, and of *representation*, allowed him to show that *the will is the thing-in-itself, and is beyond all representation*.¹³⁴ And, for Schopenhauer, that there exists two types of possible knowledge further rests on there being *two types of reality*.

However, and more gravely, Atwell’s monistic solution does not address the issue as to how we can *know* the will in the capacity of it being the Kantian thing-in-itself. *By virtue of its*

¹³¹ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 274

¹³² We can liken this, for instance, to ice that has melted to become water. Both possess the exact same properties, only their *form* is different.

¹³³ Atwell believed this exception had salutary consequences: “only because an act of will has at least one feature fully in common with the world of nature....can an act of will serve as the key to interpreting the world of nature” see: Atwell, J. E. (1995) *Schopenhauer on the Character of the World: The Metaphysics of Will*, p. 116

¹³⁴ Hamlyn, D. *Schopenhauer and Knowledge*, in Janaway, C. (Ed.) (1999) *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, p. 45-46

manifestation, we know it, albeit in a putatively limited way¹³⁵. Yet, as promulgated by Schopenhauer, the will qua the thing-in-itself is completely unconditioned by, and foreign to, the principle (of sufficient reason) that allows for all human knowledge (this will be greatly expanded on shortly). Essentially, I feel this solution posits a reductionist model that is *self-contradictory*; everything is will, yet, in the capacity that it is the thing-in-itself, we have no way in which to know that everything is will.

3.3.2 How can the will be known?

According to Schopenhauer, the will qua the thing-in-itself is additionally knowable by human subjects through our bodies (albeit, in this capacity, it is *temporally conditioned*) (see section 2.4. The Will as body). As an *objectification of the will*, it renders the will perceptible as a representation: “will that has become representation”¹³⁶. Later Schopenhauer specifically states that, through our bodies, the will has “not wholly entered into the form of representation”¹³⁷, and thus we know it “not as a whole, but only in its particular acts”¹³⁸. Specifically, acts of will are “only the nearest and clearest *phenomenon* of the thing-in-itself”¹³⁹. This statement is further qualified when Schopenhauer admonishes the reader to appreciate that “even the inward observation we have of our own will still does not by any means furnish an exhaustive and adequate knowledge of the thing-in-itself”¹⁴⁰. Only if it was an “immediate observation”¹⁴¹, and not *mediated by the will*, would it do so. Yet, *at the same time*, he declares that “the thing-in-itself is known immediately in so far as it appears as his own body”¹⁴² and, elsewhere, that “this *thing in itself*...is nothing but what we know directly and intimately and find within ourselves as *the will*”¹⁴³. Furthermore, he states that “only the *will* is *thing-in-itself*”¹⁴⁴, and, “as such it is not representation at all, but *toto*

¹³⁵ As opposed being known *immediately* through the body “the thing-in-itself is known...only mediately in so far as it is objectified in the other objects of perception” see Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 19

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, Volume 2., p. 197

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 19

¹⁴³ Schopenhauer, A. (1992) *On the Will in Nature*, E.F.J. Payne (trans.), New York, Berg, p. 216. cited in Young, J. Schopenhauer, (2005), New York, Routledge, p. 91

¹⁴⁴ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 110

genere different therefrom”¹⁴⁵ And, as we have seen, all knowledge “is above all else and essentially *representation*” To summarise then:

1. Through our body (specifically ‘movements’ of the body) the will qua the thing-in-itself has *become representation*; as such we can know it through our bodies, if only in a derivate way as a *phenomenon* that is *conditioned temporally*.
2. In this capacity- knowing the will qua the thing-in-itself through the body via the latter’s *particular acts*- it has not yet wholly entered *the form of a representation*.
3. The will is the thing-in-itself, and, as such is *totally different from representation*.

This is clearly a convoluted, confusing and contradictory picture. With regards to this conundrum, let us first consider what appear to be three of the most consistent and unequivocal of Schopenhauer’s assertions throughout his philosophy: that 1. *Will is not representation*, 2. *Will is the thing-in-itself*, and 3. *Only representations are knowledge for a subject*. Now keeping the above conundrum in mind, commitment to these assertions would, as others¹⁴⁶ have stated, appear to render the situation thus (the following statements are within the bounds of the epistemological/ontological framework Schopenhauer himself set up.):

1. The will, if it is to be knowable, must be posited as being a *representation*,

Therefore, if conceded to, we now have two options:

2. The will is not a representation, therefore it is unknowable, or,
3. The will is a representation, therefore it is knowable.

However, this situation is unacceptable for Schopenhauer; it is a clear affront to his conviction that *will and representation are wholly dissimilar*, and that *only representations are knowable*. Acquiescing to these statements rebukes his conviction that the will is the thing-in-itself (and also his epistemology). His remonstrations about the will being the thing-in-itself, and his very theory of it, are thus rendered nugatory. Indeed his *whole*

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ See Gardiner, P. (1963) *Schopenhauer*, p. 172., and Janaway, C. (1999) *Self and World in Schopenhauer’s Philosophy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp. 192-193

metaphysics is dead in the water. His proposition of will amounts to a proposition of some entity- an “x”- (à la the Kantian thing-in-itself) that is ineludibly precluded from human experience.

Now Schopenhauer always propounded his philosophy to be *immanent*¹⁴⁷, and his own definition of metaphysics is of “every alleged knowledge that goes beyond the possibility of experience, and so beyond nature or the given phenomenal appearance of things”¹⁴⁸ This definition must be supplanted by Schopenhauer’s qualification that *metaphysics can be congruent with an immanent philosophy: our experience of phenomenon can act as a catalyst for understanding the inner “kernel” of nature. This kernel “can never be entirely separated from the phenomenon...but is known always only in its relations and references to the phenomenon itself”*¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, such qualifications do not extricate us from this metaphysical mire. If anything, they *solidify* it. Schopenhauer obdurately, and repeatedly, claims that the will, albeit underpinning it, was not representation; indeed, as the thing-in-itself it was wholly different therefrom. And all knowledge- no matter how disparate- constituted representation (consciousness of an object) for a subject. He *intimates* that there *is* knowledge that is unconditional and consequently non-representational, but, to be sure, and in order to validly identify the will with the Kantian thing-in-itself, he should have introduced and propounded such a type of knowledge. It seems to me as if Schopenhauer had sensed he had reached an impasse and was trying his best to get around this with ‘linguistic gymnastics’ i.e. this talk of the will *not quite yet entering the form of* representation, and acts of will only being known as a *phenomenon* of the thing-in-itself. Perhaps, with regard to the will *becoming representation through the body*, he was speaking purely metaphorically; however this is not clear from the text.

In attempting to resolve this situation three specific solutions will be presented¹⁵⁰. These are 1. By excising the theory of will, as being the thing-in-itself, completely from Schopenhauer’s philosophy, or, 2. By postulating that the thing-in-itself is only known to the mystic as an

¹⁴⁷ As opposed to *transcendent*. Immanent, in this context, means ‘of the empirical world’, rather than transcendent, which means ‘beyond the empirical world’.

¹⁴⁸ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 2., p. 164

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183

¹⁵⁰ Atwell’s solution- interpreting Schopenhauer’s will in an entirely monistic way- has also been cited as a possible solution to this problem. However, I feel it has no utility here. And, as demonstrated in section 3.3.1, it also presents us with further problems. Thus it will not be talked of further.

ineffable mode of being, and, 3. To demarcate between *will as thing-in-itself*, and *will as the manifestation of the thing-in-itself*.

Julius Frauenstädt (1813-1879), a contemporary of Schopenhauer's, deemed it an error to identify the will with Kant's thing-in-itself, opining it best be left undetermined. Through written correspondence, he relayed this sentiment to Schopenhauer, who, clearly repulsed by such a proposal, responded "Then I could immediately throw my whole philosophy out the window. It is precisely my great discovery that Kant's thing-in-itself is that which we find in self-consciousness as the will..."¹⁵¹ However, this identification is a palpable mistake on Schopenhauer's part, for, as we have seen, Kant's thing-in-itself is *wholly* unconditioned: aspatial, acausal and atemporal. And, in the capacity that the will qua the thing-in-itself is known through the body, it is conditioned *temporally*. Furthermore the Kantian thing-in-itself also resides beyond the *subject* (self-consciousness), per se. This has led not just Frauenstädt, but many Schopenhauer scholars to conclude that he should have been agnostic with regards to the thing-in-itself, at least in the capacity that it is the Kantian thing-in-itself. Moreover, even *knowledge of the will as a representation- which is a contradiction when using Schopenhauer's epistemological criteria-* does not necessarily give us any knowledge of the thing-in-itself. To my way of current thinking, there is no conceivable way around this problem. And, as defined by Kant, I am not sure there will ever be a possible way to *know* the thing-in-itself. Thus, as it stands, it is hard to give *any* credence to Schopenhauer's repeated assertion that his will is the Kantian thing-in-itself.

The second possible solution to this problem lies in the '*mystical conception*' or '*non-being conception*' of the thing-in-itself. This conception, which also constitutes Schopenhauer's ultimate solution to the suffering in life, is exemplified in the notion of a *wholly unconditioned being*: a being that has "attained complete denial of the will"¹⁵², and is completely liberated, not only from all desire, but also from *all* modes of conditioned thought and knowledge. As such, this being is no longer even a *subject*, per se. This complete negation of the will renders the subject at one with the omnipresent, unitary will;

¹⁵¹ Schopenhauer, A. (1978) *Gesammelte Briefe*, (ed. Arthur Hübscher), Bonn, Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, p. 279., as cited in Atwell, J. E. (1995) *Schopenhauer on the Character of the World: The Metaphysics of Will*, p. 113

¹⁵² Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1., p. 410

all individuation consequently ceases. Thus, “such a state cannot really be called knowledge since it no longer has the form of subject and object”¹⁵³ With the total negation of will, the world itself is abolished “No will, no representation, now world.”¹⁵⁴ This mystical fusion (which *does* constitute a type of knowledge: see below) of the subject with the thing-in-itself is denoted by terms such as “ecstasy,” “rapture”, and “illumination”.

This solution, I feel, only has utility in the sense that it affirms the existence of ‘something’ that resides beyond the intellect, and confirms a universal phenomenological experience that language can’t express¹⁵⁵. Strictly speaking, it does not address *any* of the fundamental problems outlined above, and, as such, is the weakest solution. Moreover it creates several formidable problems.

Firstly, Schopenhauer opines that this mystical consciousness/state “is only accessible to one’s own experience that cannot be further communicated”¹⁵⁶ If such a state is indeed ineffable how can we know anything about it? Words such as “Union with God”, “rapture” etc., therefore, do not, and cannot, denote *anything* (give us any knowledge) about the thing-in-itself. Secondly, and most obviously, if we ourselves are nothing but will, how is it possible to *totally* negate our very own substance? How can we annihilate that which we are¹⁵⁷? Schopenhauer pre-empts us here, acknowledging this difficulty. Yet he offers no remedy other than noting that “absolute nothingness” is utterly inconceivable; the state of nothingness always being relative to something existent. From this he concludes that denial of the will *does not* entail death, but rather a *novel form of awareness*. Thirdly, Schopenhauer states that in this mystical consciousness “the will has vanished...Only knowledge remains”¹⁵⁸. Now this blatantly contradicts his prior assertion that the mystical state does not entail any real knowledge (such a state being bereft of the subject/object distinction). However, to resolve this, we can validly assume that Schopenhauer, as he often does, is speaking metaphorically: when speaking about topics which are excluded from, or anomalous to, human experience, we must all inevitably use metaphor.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 411

¹⁵⁵ I am aware I have committed the crime I am shortly to accuse Schopenhauer with.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ This does not entail suicide, which Schopenhauer *does not* espouse, deeming it an *affirmation* of the will.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Another possible solution¹⁵⁹ to this problem is to draw a sharp distinction between *will as thing-in-itself* (*metaphysical will*), and, *will as manifestation of the thing-in-itself* (*phenomenal will*). This solution purports that Schopenhauer himself always draws such a distinction, and that, to be strict, he *claims* the *manifestation of the thing-in-itself in the phenomenal world* (*representational world*) *was will*, not that the *will was the thing-in-itself*. We know the *former*, but not the *latter*. And, *even in the capacity that we know the former*, we have *no* direct knowledge of the thing-in-itself *ever*. Consequently, we can only ‘know about’ it, we cannot ‘know’ it; we merely possess ‘knowledge by description’ about the thing-in-itself, not any ‘knowledge by acquaintance’ (as some interpret Schopenhauer to feel) about it. The *metaphysical will* manifests itself in the phenomenal world (specifically through *matter*), but has *no relation to human experience or conscious awareness*. As such, Schopenhauer does *not* contradict Kant: *the thing-in-itself remains wholly unknowable*. Even the most intimate awareness of our own body furnishes us with *no* knowledge of the Kantian thing-in-itself; it only constitutes phenomenal knowledge (knowledge of representation).

Now this solution has the *ostensible* benefit of affording the will- as the *phenomenal will*- an *independent relationship* (from the Kantian thing-in-itself). I say ostensible because, in this view, the phenomenal will (representation) *still* retains a clear *relation/link* to the metaphysical will (thing-in-itself): it, albeit tacitly, seems to posit the latter as the *cause* of the former. Notwithstanding a causal relationship, the phenomenal will can still only be seen in light of the metaphysical will (thing-in-itself); the former would not exist without the later. Thus such an independent relationship does not exist. Now, by so doing, we are back at the problem of how the will can be manifested in representation (see section 3.3.1. How can the will be *manifested*?). However this solution does offer a view of the will which is consistent with Schopenhauer’s epistemology, in the sense that it states that only phenomenal (representational) knowledge is possible. Nevertheless, on the whole, to my way of thinking, this solution comes from a somewhat select (but nonetheless perspicacious) reading/interpretation of Schopenhauer: in framing itself, it disregards/reframes Schopenhauer’s statements of the will qua the thing-in-itself being

¹⁵⁹ As advanced by Magee, B. (1997) *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, New York, Oxford University Press, see chapter 21, *Misunderstanding Schopenhauer*, p. 440

knowable specifically through the body, and bulwarks itself almost exclusively on his agnostic claims about the thing-in-itself. Furthermore, I cannot agree that Schopenhauer, according to this solutions author, is “always aware of the distinction between *will* as his name for the noumenon and *will* as his name for appearance or manifestation in the world of phenomena”¹⁶⁰ This statement is not evidenced in Schopenhauer’s work.

3.4 Problems with the will in Schopenhauer’s aesthetics and ethics

The (affirmation of the) will, as demonstrated, is culpable, according to Schopenhauer, for all the *sufferings* in the world. It is *the* ultimate reality, and *we ourselves- all of us- are identical to this reality- we are all one*. This metaphysical stance- *that the whole of reality is constituted by the same essence-* is the *basis* of Schopenhauer’s ethics, and consequently leads to his espousal of compassion and Christian-like ethics. Albeit such a metaphysical foundation to an ethical system is highly innovative, and *prima facie* makes sense (i.e. why else would/should we have compassion for anyone?), it is nonetheless questionable in light of the nature of the will. The will is self-devouring and constantly in conflict with its differing levels and inter-level objectifications. Now, as an embodiment of this very will, it is hard to conceive of human beings being *other – any other-* than in a state of *constant* conflict and turmoil. It seems that the nature of the will *precludes mutual love and compassion, by perforce*. It renders them not only untenable, but, literally, impossible. Additionally, we can view *compassion*, on Schopenhauer’s account, as being, in essence, *egoistic*. To help another through acts of compassion is, in actual fact, to fundamentally help *ourselves*; to promote our *own* well-being. This promotion of our own well-being amounts to what constitutes egoism for Schopenhauer, which he paradoxically purports to be wholly antagonistic to compassion.

3.4.1 Problems with the ontological status of the Platonic Ideas

As demonstrated, aesthetic contemplation, and the Platonic Ideas are greatly linked in Schopenhauer’s aesthetics, most notably in the *contemplation of nature and art*. However, the *ontological status* of the Ideas in his system is not entirely clear. What exactly are the Platonic Ideas for Schopenhauer? And do the Ideas belong to the world of will, the world of

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 443

representation, or both? Or are they located in some reality existing *between the will and the particular objects of the phenomenal world*? Due to Schopenhauer's contradictory statements on this matter, it is hard to ascertain his exact position. After examining how Schopenhauer defines the Platonic Idea, I shall look at each of these possibilities in turn.

Introducing the Platonic Idea in the second book of *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer states that he uses the term *Idea* in a Platonic manner: "... with me the word is always to be understood in its genuine and original meaning, given to it by Plato..."¹⁶¹ Making it clear how this meaning is to be understood, he further states that "...by Idea I understand every definite and fixed grade of the will's objectification, in so far it is thing-in-itself and therefore foreign to plurality"¹⁶² Schopenhauer further distinguishes Platonic Ideas from *objects of intuitive perception* i.e. chairs, mountains etc., and also from *concepts*.¹⁶³

As the Platonic Ideas are the "immediate, and therefore adequate, objectivity of the thing in itself"¹⁶⁴ and exist as "the whole thing-in-itself"¹⁶⁵ they are thus atemporal, aspatial, "groundless" and "foreign to plurality"¹⁶⁶ Now, in this capacity, the Ideas exist *independently from the PSR*, and, as such, cannot be understood in terms of spatio-temporal and casual relations. Accordingly, one would posit their existence in the *world of will*.

However, at the same time, the Platonic Idea, as an objectification of the thing-in-itself is an *object of perception*. It is thus *knowable as a representation; an object for a subject*. Indeed, Schopenhauer states: "the Platonic Idea is necessarily object, something known, a representation..."¹⁶⁷ Accordingly, the Platonic Ideas exist in the *world of representation*.

However, The Platonic Idea comprehended in phenomenal objects, *albeit being an object for a subject*, is, paradoxically, unconditioned by the PSR. It is a *universal*; it "has laid aside merely the subordinate forms of the phenomenon, all of which we include under the

¹⁶¹ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 1, p. 129.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 130

¹⁶³ Schopenhauer's definition was clearly dissimilar to Plato's. Chiefly, for Plato, the *Idea* was *ontologically fundamental*. In contrast, Schopenhauer believed the *will*, not the *Idea*, to be ontologically fundamental.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 174

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 130

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 175

principle of sufficient reason; or rather it has not yet entered into them”¹⁶⁸ In such a capacity it has the properties of the will qua the thing-in-itself i.e. timeless, aspatial, and acausal. Thus they are clearly *unlike* normal representations. This anomalous quality leads to the view that the Ideas may reside somewhere other than in the world of will or representation.

The third possible ontological location of the Platonic Idea is *between the will and the particular objects of the phenomenal world* (see Figure 2). Schopenhauer does acknowledge that the Ideas do differ from the will (i.e. *as being an object for a subject*) However, owing to their dissimilarity to normal representations, they constitute a *novel type of representation*, and would seem to exist in a *medial world, where the objectivity of the will as Platonic Ideas resides*.

In summary, this ambiguity pertaining to the ontological location of the Ideas is this: they seem to exist in the world of will *and* the world of representation, albeit they are dissimilar to normal representations. Thus we can posit three ontological locations for the Platonic Ideas:

1. The world of will.
2. The world of representation.
3. ‘The world of Platonic Ideas’: Medial world: between the world of will and world of representation.

However, if we accept his dual ontology i.e. the world of *will* and *representation*, this precludes the Ideas existing in an additional world. Now in order to overcome this I feel there is three viable options. 1. We would *have to* create a new ontological level in which the Ideas exist, which would render Schopenhauer’s ontology as consisting of *three* types of reality. 2. We could, as some do¹⁶⁹, interpret them as being part of the world of representation; they are not ontologically dissimilar from objects of intuitive perception, but rather are representations that are *perceived in a distinct way* i.e. in a *disinterested way*, where we only perceive the *essential* in the object. This is plausible and obviously congruent

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ For Instance, see Janaway, C. (1994) *Schopenhauer*, Oxford, Oxford University Press., and Young, J. (1987) *Willing and Unwilling: A study of the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer*, Dordrecht, Nijhoff.

with Schopenhauer's aesthetic consciousness. Finally, we can view the Ideas as *will as Idea*, as opposed to *will as thing-in-itself*. Will qua the thing-in-itself, we *cannot know*, but the Idea, as being object (free from time, space and causality) is *not* will qua the thing-in-itself, but is *will as Idea*, which we *can* know. However, I feel this solution is inadequate in the sense that the Ideas *still*, at base, constitute, or offer a mirror image of the will i.e. *will as Idea*. And Schopenhauer constantly declares the will to be the thing-in-itself and that only representation was knowable.

3.5 "The worst of all possible worlds"?

Schopenhauer asserts this world to be "the worst of all possible worlds"; a world on the *brink of annihilation*. I dispute the validity of this assertion. Now in conceiving that this world was the worst of all possible worlds, Schopenhauer reasons that the world is arranged as it is "to be capable of continuing with great difficulty to exist"¹⁷⁰ If the conditions in the world were "a little worse, it would no longer be capable of continuing to exist"¹⁷¹.

Schopenhauer thus states "Consequently, since a worse world could not continue to exist, it is absolutely impossible; and so this world is itself the worst of all possible worlds"¹⁷². Now, in objection to this, I *can* imagine worse¹⁷³ conditions of existence, with the world still being able to exist, and *still* allowing for human existence. As an example, it is *possible* that there *was* a moderate increase in temperature that *did not* render all rivers and springs dry.¹⁷⁴ It is *possible* that this (possible) increase in temperature would not only *fail to dry all rivers and springs*, but be compensated for, and/or neutralized by another force, or forces, of nature: for instance, a longer and wetter winter season. It is possible that, rather than attenuate or extinguish existence, such a state of affairs may *enrich and prolong it* i.e. longer winter seasons allow for the attainment of greater stores of water, thus leading to *salutary* effects.

Furthermore, if we interpret 'worse world' as meaning 'a world with more human suffering', it is palpably clear that such a world *could* exist and *still allow for human existence*. I can imagine profoundly larger quantities of suffering existing in mankind. I can envisage a world

¹⁷⁰ Schopenhauer, A. (1969) *WWR*, Volume 2., p. 583

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ I understand the word 'worse' as meaning 'the least satisfactory conditions for the world to exist and to continue doing so'.

¹⁷⁴ I am here referring to the example Schopenhauer himself puts forth.

where the preponderance of mankind is in pronounced physical and/or psychical torment. Hitherto I have never been accosted or a victim to any violence on my way to my local shop. But I can imagine a world *much greater in conflict* which precludes us even leaving our homes without being assailed. Such a worse state of affairs would *not* render humanity extinct.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Schopenhauer's will is fundamental, and of central importance, to all facets of his philosophy. It accounts for *all* phenomena and behaviour in the world- inorganic and organic. This comprehensive account of reality entails a remarkable and bold undertaking. We have seen this centrality of the will in its putative capacity as the Kantian thing-in-itself, in its manifestation in representation, and in its inexorable relationship to the body. We have seen how it is culpable for all worldly suffering, and, how, through its negation, we can attain deliverance from such suffering. Its inexorable relationship to his aesthetics has been demonstrated and, in a greatly innovative way, we have seen how it provided the foundation for Schopenhauer's ethics. Additionally, and most contentiously, Schopenhauer purported that the will, as the thing-in-itself, was knowable in myriad ways. Its graded objectification in phenomenal objects provided us with the most limited means of knowing it. The contemplation of Platonic Ideas furnished us with a more profound knowledge of it. Through our bodies, via the faculty of self-consciousness, we had direct access to, and knowledge, of it.

As demonstrated, Schopenhauer's theory of will does have several problems, and, due to the very centrality of it within his thought, these are dispersed throughout his philosophy: from his epistemology to his aesthetics. Some of these infractions can possibly be rectified by reinterpretations of his theory, though such reinterpretations usually beget their own difficulties. Most salient of the problems in Schopenhauer's theory is his resolute identification of the will with the Kantian thing-in-itself. This identification seems to greatly undermine his philosophy and remains refractory to any solution.

However, Schopenhauer must have anticipated these problems, at least to some extent, when he stated that his philosophy does not leave "no problem still to be solved, no possible question unanswered...To assert anything of the kind would be a presumptuous

denial of the limits of human knowledge in general”¹⁷⁵ So long as our knowledge is restricted to that of the phenomenal world; so long as it is wholly circumscribed by our own cognitive faculties “our horizon will always remain encircled by the depth of night”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 185

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

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