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### CHAPTER

## 26 Post-Schopenhauerian Metaphysics: Hartmann, Mainländer, Bahnsen, and Nietzsche

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### Abstract

This chapter offers a synoptic view of an important strand in Schopenhauer's legacy, the philosophical interest of which remains underappreciated: the diverse attempts of certain highly creative thinkers in the period 1860–1880 to refashion Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will in alternative and, they argue, more satisfactory and fruitful terms. The principal works in question are von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1868), Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Mainländer's *Philosophie der Erlösung* (Vol. 1, 1876), and Bahnsen's *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt* (1880). The author's aim is to compare these developments systematically and relate them back to the doctrines and tensions in Schopenhauer from which they originate, in each case drawing out their original features and indicating their philosophical rationale.

**Keywords:** Schopenhauer, Mainländer, Bahnsen, Hartmann, Freud, pessimism

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As Frederick Beiser observes in his recent, ground-breaking study of the late nineteenth-century pessimism debate, the remarkable influence of Schopenhauer in this period owes a great deal to the crisis of identity which philosophy had suffered in the wake of the collapse of the systematic ambitions of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and the (closely associated) self-emancipation of the empirical sciences.<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer, though not historically effective in either development, was discovered mid-century to have been profoundly attuned to both—to have seen through the rhetoric of “intellectual intuition” and the Concept, and to have rightly emphasized the conditioning of human reason by nature—and moreover to have worked out an alternative path for philosophy to take in light of the impossibility of rationalizing the world in the manner of German Idealism.

This forms the broad background of the thinkers discussed in this chapter, whose major philosophical writings all appeared within a relatively short period, 1869 to 1888. They are selected not in the first instance because of their contribution to the pessimism question tabled by Schopenhauer, but rather because of their concern with the question of what metaphysics can amount to after Schopenhauer. What unifies Eduard von Hartmann, Philipp Mainländer, Julius Bahnsen, and Friedrich Nietzsche, I will suggest, is (A) their recognition of a fundamental respect in which the system set forth in *The World as Will and Representation* (WWR) is problematic, along with (B) their acceptance of a positive insight which they find in Schopenhauer and which shows the limitations of, and the need to revise, other contemporary schools of philosophy.

p. 456 The former has to do, not ultimately with the particular content of Schopenhauer's major metaphysical theses, though certainly these are subjected to heavy challenge, but with the *status* of his assertions. If, as Schopenhauer claims, reason reveals its necessary total emptiness in face of metaphysical questions, then what kind of discourse can WWR itself amount to? How can the world be known to *be will and representation*—and to include a transcendental subject, and to involve the mediation of Ideas, and so on —if reason is merely a device for structuring phenomena and cognition merely a means for negotiating desire-satisfaction?<sup>2</sup>

What unites Hartmann *et al* is their refusal to take this difficulty as a reason for turning their backs on the system of WWR. This sets them, as Beiser again emphasizes, at odds with the Neo-Kantian attempt at a fully rational reconstruction of human knowledge.

The positive insight which they find in Schopenhauer has two distinguishable but interconnected parts. (B1) The failure of WWR to reflexively validate itself is a direct consequence of what it correctly gets into philosophical focus. The shortfall in Schopenhauer—as it must seem to Fichte and the later Idealists who had staked everything on showing that the System of Philosophy demonstrates its own unique correctness, and to Kantians convinced that only absurdity can result from any claim to know the Unconditioned—is precisely the mark of its success. What Schopenhauer grasps, and is duly reflected in the way that WWR leaves the status of its own discourse unaccounted for, is the resistance of content to form, the independence of being from thought, of existence from essence, of the *Daß* from the *Was* of the world. The dualism can be formulated in indefinitely many ways, but its proximal origin lies in Kant's famous dichotomy of intuition and concept: Schopenhauer's insight is that, though superficially the two may be annexed, there is a profound and enveloping sense in which (to put the point in Kantian language) rational conceptual form and nonrational intuitive content remain absolutely alien to one another. Whence Schopenhauer's metaphilosophical problem: How can it be *thought* that there is a single world which is thinkable *as the one* and also *as the other*? Indeed, how, without invoking some common measure, can it be meaningfully *said* of these two things, or world-aspects, that they are “absolutely alien” to one another?

The other, complementary component of Schopenhauer's positive insight is (B2) the immediate connection of the world's cognitive impenetrability with its *wrongness*. The claim here is not, of course, that the world's nonamenability to our comprehension is the *reason* for its seeming alienation from the Good—which would make WWR compatible with traditional theodicies—but that its epistemic opacity on the one hand and its axiological negativity on the other constitute a single, imponderable state of affairs.

Taking this assessment of Schopenhauer to provide the common starting point of Hartmann and the others involves a degree of rational reconstruction. What I nonetheless aim to make plausible is that the *positive* metaphysical and axiological significance of Schopenhauer's limitations provides a basis for unifying these four thinkers in a more systematic sense than that in which the history of philosophy recognizes a *Schopenhauerschule*.<sup>3</sup>

Since limitations of space will allow no more than a brief and selective sketch of the relevant positions, it will help to give in advance an overview of how, on my account, the various post-Schopenhauerians are differentiated and how each may be taken to represent a different path proceeding from the same point of origin. Taking the problem bequeathed by Schopenhauer to be, as explained, that of expressing the ultimate reality of will and the dualistic limit which is thereby set to philosophical reason, their various solutions may be summarized as follows. (1) Hartmann, Mainländer, and Bahnsen may all be regarded as aiming to reunite, in one way or other, the terms that Schopenhauer sets in opposition, though without, of course, reverting to the monism of the German Idealists or any earlier figure in the history of philosophy.<sup>4</sup> (1a) In Hartmann's case, this involves postulating alongside *Wille* an item on loan from Hegel: *die Idee*, to which Hartmann attributes an equal degree of fundamental metaphysical reality. (1b) Mainländer employs a different strategy: if the problem is that Schopenhauer's single world exists (so to speak) in two separate halves, then the solution is to join them by treating them as distinct but intelligibly related world-stages in a single world-narrative. (1c) Bahnsen's treatment, we will see, is the most systematically penetrating and closely attuned to the metaphilosophical problem facing Schopenhauer. Noncoincidentally, it also poses the greatest difficulties of understanding. It consists, in terms which will require clarification, in transposing into reality the structure of reason described in Schopenhauer's *Fourfold Root* and in identifying this structure with the theory of world-as-will. The result is a monism in which the "One" is contradictory. (2) When we come to Nietzsche, there is a fundamental shift: mediating Schopenhauer's dualism by means of theoretical reflection is no longer the aim, and, in this regard, his departure from Schopenhauer is more radical. Yet, in another respect, Nietzsche remains, I will try to show, wholly faithful to Schopenhauer—at least, as Nietzsche understands him. Nietzsche's philosophical project is organized *ab initio* around the thought that, though the need for philosophical reflection has never been greater, Schopenhauer has crossed a line: he has shown that the game of philosophical rationalization and systematic innovation is over and that a new *species* of philosophical discourse must be forged.

The final section of the chapter, which briefly outlines Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), may seem unconnected in so far as Freud has not the slightest interest in Schopenhauer's metaphysical difficulties, and the text belongs to another century. I include it nonetheless because, as I hope will become clear, it represents a further chapter in the same systematic story: having handed over all intellectual authority to natural science, Freud rediscovers Schopenhauerian metaphysics, or its equivalent, within nature. The further interest of this is to indicate that, though the vision which animates post-Schopenhauerian metaphysics may have slipped out of historical memory, it remains recognizable in contemporary terms.

## 26.1 Hartmann

p. 458 The concept which figures in the title of Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*—first published in 1869, followed by another ten editions in Hartmann's own lifetime—carries almost none of the meaning that we now, after Freud, attach to it. Hartmann's unconscious is not localized in human beings, nor has it any special association with problems of psychological explanation, least of all with the irrational aspects of mental life. Hartmann's theory of the unconscious serves instead as a framework for the large-scale philosophical synthesis of Schopenhauer with Hegel that he proposes. The intention is even-handed: it is to give both parties equal weight in fashioning an original form of monism, one that employs the deficiencies of each allegedly one-sided system as a motive for unifying it with the other. Thus, if Hartmann is right, his system can be justified from two directions, either through a critique of Hegelianism which shows the need for its union with Schopenhauerianism, or vice versa. Hartmann also supposes, and this comprises a further important part of his strategy, that Hegel and Schopenhauer can be seen jointly to form an antinomy: because each has an irrefutable claim to truth, their systems must be viewed as contraries, not as contradictories, and his own philosophy of the unconscious, he claims, provides the (unique) solution to the antinomy.<sup>5</sup>

Purely conceptual reflection on the systems of classical German philosophy is not, however, Hartmann's primary method in *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, which is instead provided—stepping out of the idealist tradition—by reflection on the empirical sciences. Hence the book's subtitle: "Speculative Results According to the Inductive Method of Physical Science."

Hartmann's master argument is abductive in nature and allows itself to be stated in relatively simple terms.<sup>6</sup> The special complexity of living creatures finds its best explanation in the supposition that their structural and functional properties, as we know them from ordinary observation and scientific study, are the product of *volition conjoined with representation*: in other words, organisms are organized as they are because they are *meant* to be thus. If this recalls the traditional argument from design, it is because Hartmann is indeed employing one of its major premises: namely, that life can arise only from intelligence or some approximation thereto. He avoids the traditional theistic conclusion by insisting, first, that the representation (or motive) involved is *unconscious*, and, second, that the act of will which executes the motive (i.e., gives the organism its structure) is not external to it, as a Divine Author would be, but immanent within it. Further reasoning of the same type warrants, Hartmann claims, the hypothesis that the manifold of volitions which comprise the natural world is unified in a single Unconscious, the "All-One."<sup>7</sup>

The bulk of *Philosophy of the Unconscious* applies this form of argument to a vast range of cases drawn from the recent empirical literature, and the work's extraordinary contemporary success owed a great deal to the way in which Hartmann impressed his readers with his knowledgeable scientificity, as if he were following the same robustly empirical route as Darwin but arriving at a deeper, more spiritually intriguing conclusion regarding what is going on in Nature—a conclusion from which, if Hartmann is right, an entire ethical and religious *Weltanschauung* can be extracted. Knowledge of the metaphysical meaning of Nature shows us, he argues, how the Good should be conceived.

p. 459 Hartmann's departure from Schopenhauer is evident and becomes clearer through comparison of their respective theories of organic life. The original agenda for German philosophical thought on the topic as a whole had been set by Kant's account, in the Third *Critique*, of the problem posed by teleological judgment: (1) living beings are unrecognizable, indeed unthinkable, without employment of the concept of an end; (2) yet no ends can be attributed to Nature, which lacks reason and freedom; (3) to attribute those ends to a divine author would, however, reduce living beings to artifacts, which is inconsistent with our conception of them as bearing their purposiveness within themselves. Now Hartmann, we have just seen, rejects (2) and so, too, does Schopenhauer, but for quite different reasons. Schopenhauer invests Nature with purposivity,

but it is independent of reason: its teleological character is treated as a consequence of the objectivating, expressive relation that obtains in general between will and representation, which is emphatically noninstrumental. Hartmann by contrast *does* attribute reason (if not freedom) to Nature: its individual phenomena and their collective order are on his account products of instrumental reasoning. The difference in a nutshell is that representation, in the form of a motive, is for Schopenhauer a mere *phenomenon* of will, an *appearance* belonging to a different ontological order, while for Hartmann will and representation have parity (just as, in ordinary practical reasoning, desires and beliefs combine to yield reasons for action). The component of representation, or belief, must be supplied independently, which is why we must also turn to Hegel.

From this emerges a further important point. Hartmann is no transcendental idealist, and he regards Schopenhauer's commitment to this large portion of the Kantian legacy as a major error. Whatever gap there may be between "appearance" and reality can be bridged, Hartmann believes, by inductive inference. In 1871, Hartmann reinforced his rejection of transcendental idealism by publishing a detailed critique of Kant in which he explicitly affirms our knowledge of the constitution of things in themselves and also repudiates Schopenhauer's assertion of an essential difference between consciousness-of-will and object-consciousness: our acts of will are simply, Hartmann maintains, further objects of cognition.<sup>8</sup> This allows Hartmann to furnish will with exactly the same plain realist epistemology as any other object of knowledge. Schopenhauer's metaphilosophical problems thereupon disappear: if things in themselves demand no special mode of access, and if they exhaust the domain of knowable entities, then no special discourse is required for their philosophical articulation. Hartmann consequently has no need for Schopenhauer's dark but crucial notion of the presence and expression of will in worldly things, nor of a "miracle" of subject/body identity.<sup>9</sup>

Hartmann's theory of organic nature also puts him in a position to make an internal criticism of Schopenhauer calling for Hegelian remedy.<sup>10</sup> Schopenhauer affirms that there are essences in Nature which do not derive from the principle of sufficient reason, and, in order to account for these, Hartmann introduces his theory of Ideas. Now these Ideas must themselves be *objects*, while the subject *for* whom they are objects must be timeless and absolute. Since the relation of Ideas to this absolute subject cannot, according to Schopenhauer's own principle of subject-object correlation, be contingent, they must jointly compose an absolute subject-object. Ideas are furthermore, on Schopenhauer's account, expressions of will, and, as such, they must be defined by ends, without which they would be blind striving (i.e., undifferentiated from mere *Wille*). And since these ends presuppose in turn some ideational content, we again arrive at an ontology in which ideation and volition are equiprimordial.

p. 460 From all that has been said, Hartmann's metaphysics would seem broadly Aristotelian, and, consequently, to lean strongly in Hegel's direction. How then, it may be asked, can Hartmann suppose himself to have preserved anything much of Schopenhauer? All he offers, it seems, is the very general notion that, if Hegel is not to fall prey to the standard charge of panlogicism, then he must presuppose some kind of ontological *prima materia*, of which Schopenhauer's *Wille* may be redolent, but which scarcely warrants the specific synthesis he proposes.<sup>11</sup>

The answer lies in Hartmann's cosmological prequel.<sup>12</sup> Though his plain epistemology leaves no riddle to be solved concerning the coming-together of subject and object, the central *explanandum* of post-Kantian idealism, Hartmann is nonetheless able to allow that at the end of the day we face a puzzle. The world is a compound of will and idea. But why should there be any such thing? No a posteriori datum can account for it, since all such data presuppose it. But nor can it be understood a priori, for nothing in the bare concepts of *Idee* and *Wille* implicate one another: far from fitting together as hand and glove, they are as alien to one another as numbers and colors. Hartmann therefore reasserts at this point Schopenhauer's dualism, though in a different formulation. And the only hypothesis available, he argues, is that their intermingling results from an *irrational act*, and since no irrationality can infect the *Idee*, and action is the prerogative of *Wille*, the

existence of the world must be due to violence done by the latter, to the former; that is, to *Wille*'s invasion of *Idee*.<sup>13</sup> In this respect Hartmann grants Schopenhauer the last word over Hegel.

One important historical point should be made concerning the deep indebtedness to Schelling of Hartmann's post-Schopenhauerian *Willensmetaphysik* (this is also true to some extent of Mainländer's and Bahnsen's metaphysics). One part of the debt is carried over from (albeit repudiated by) Schopenhauer himself, who in his early years encountered the identification of the absolute with *Wille* in Schelling's widely read *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809). The other part, which Hartmann explains convincingly and at length, concerns the way in which Schelling's later writings provide a template for the program of conjoining Hegel and Schopenhauer: the cornerstone of Hartmann's synthesis—the notion that philosophy must connect mere rational ideation with actual existence—is the defining theme of Schelling's attempt, beginning in the 1820s, to construct what he called a “positive philosophy” that would sublimate, without wholly delegitimizing, Hegel's merely “negative” “pure-rational” philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Hartmann's claim is to have fulfilled this ambition in a way that Schelling did not.

## 26.2 Mainländer

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The ethico-religious philosophy which, I said, Hartmann adds to his metaphysics is something of an afterthought: on the face of it no evolutionary or axiological dynamic is built into the (con)fusion of *Wille* and *Idee* that constitutes the world, which exists in consequence of a pre-mundane metaphysical mistake, and may be regarded with equal justification either as strictly unaccountable (the violation was unreasoned and pointless) or as strictly necessary (it is in the nature of sheer idea-less *Wille* to behave in exactly such a manner). Hartmann introduces nonetheless a dynamic element by arguing that the mistake can be corrected: it is our job to disentangle *Idee* from *Wille* and to restore the former to its original quietude; that this is the true collective task of humanity may be inferred from the fact that nature has produced self-conscious beings who are able to achieve insight into nature's own metaphysical grounds.<sup>15</sup> This represents Hartmann's revision of Book IV of *WWR1*.

Mainländer can be regarded as telling a different story of how the world came to be and as building into its very existence the dynamic, teleological dimension which Hartmann merely tacks on. The latter follows from the former because the pre-mundane source of the world can, according to Mainländer, be reconstructed—subject to certain limitations—in terms of an exercise of *practical reason*, allowing the path of the world's development to be understood as the means to the realization of a pre-mundanelly projected end, *contra* Hartmann.

The basic model employed by Mainländer—representing the world as the effect of a choice or decision, and to that extent as inherently purposive—is of course familiar from Leibniz and every other theist, while the evolutionary dimension recalls Schelling. This, along with the fact that Mainländer refers to the ground of the world as God, leads us to ask how Mainländer can acclaim Schopenhauer as a genius who shares with Kant the title of the greatest of all philosophers and describe the “philosophy of redemption” presented in *Die Philosophie der Erlösung* (published in 1876, the year of his suicide) as a development of his thought.<sup>16</sup>

The short answer is that Mainländer differs from Christian theism and from Schellingian panentheism by denying that the world's divine origin is, in any ordinary sense, axiologically affirmative. The precise purpose for which the world was brought into being, according to Mainländer, was God's own self-annihilation. In so far as the world's existence testifies to God's having chosen to relinquish his existence in favor of absolute *Nichts*, Schopenhauer's atheism is vindicated on the new basis that, although the existence of God was once (*contra* Schopenhauer) a metaphysical possibility, indeed an actuality, it is so no longer: God himself has *made atheism true*.

Given our actual beliefs and expectations, this is obviously not good news, but if we make the requisite cognitive adjustments—that is, if we recognize what is required of us in accordance with the world’s normative source—then we will be able to find fulfilment (redemption, *Erlösung*) in promoting the end that God has built into our constitution. Since God no longer exists, he can be no lawgiver, but since we enjoy no existence beyond his postmortem legacy, there is nothing else it would make sense for us to attempt to do, as residues of extinguished divinity, than continue along the path to non-being.

p. 462 Before we come to Mainländer’s central argument, one thing that is clearly essential, if this departure from Schopenhauerian orthodoxy is to seem more than an imaginative reverie elicited by WWR, is an account of what underpins the temporal, or quasi-temporal, characterizations indispensable to Mainländer’s theory of the God–world relation. Why depict the world as God’s *successor*—why accord narrative significance to the relation of God to the world, such that “God exists” was true once upon a time but becomes false in the era of worldhood? The question sharpens when we recall that the relation of  $\hookrightarrow$  *Wille* to *Vorstellung* as theorized by Schopenhauer is categorically nontemporal, and though Schopenhauer’s treatment of it may be charged with obscurity, this very obscurity is integral to his system. Consequently, from Schopenhauer’s own standpoint, Mainländer may be regarded as offering only a mythopoeic representation of the world’s double-aspectedness, the dramatic appeal of which is outweighed by its philosophical erroneousness in so far as his restoration of end-directedness to the ground of the world-as-representation—Mainländer’s reversion to theism, albeit of a peculiar and original variety—occludes Schopenhauer’s key insight that *Wille* is essentially blind.

Light can be thrown on Mainländer’s narrativization of the *Wille–Vorstellung* relation and the nature of his disagreement with Schopenhauer by returning to a problem in Kant. In the sections of his Antinomy of Pure Reason which deal with the problem of conceiving an original cause or ground of the world, Kant had argued (in the Theses of the Third and Fourth Antinomies) that we are bound by our reason to postulate a purely intelligible (i.e., nontemporal) ground of its causality and existence. This, Kant shows (in the corresponding Antitheses), generates the problem: To what series do the world and its intelligible ground jointly belong?<sup>17</sup>

Now Mainländer is well aware that God, being eternal, cannot belong to the same time-series as the world.<sup>18</sup> But in his view—which veers back toward Kant’s solution while also showing the influence of Schelling<sup>19</sup>—this does not warrant Schopenhauer’s minimalist treatment of the relation of the two realms. Just as Kant is prepared in his theory of human freedom to postulate a nontemporal ground (the individual’s “intelligible character”) of certain effects in time (those that define the individual’s “empirical character”), allowing a certain empirical act to be morally imputed to an agent’s will—a doctrine which Schopenhauer himself endorses—so Mainländer supposes that a *unitary series* may be postulated to encompass the God–world relation. This series must be described in para-temporal vocabulary and conceived as a process of development or instrumentalization.<sup>20</sup> Mainländer’s reply to Schopenhauer is therefore that, if *Wille* and *Vorstellung* are to have anything to do with one another—and if the latter is to be subordinated to the former, as per Schopenhauer’s claim that representation has only dependent reality—then we must affirm that the world as representation *follows from* the world-as-will (God) in accordance with some principle which joins them in a single series; without which they float free of one another in a way that makes nonsense of WWR.<sup>21</sup>

Assuming this license for further speculation, how does Mainländer propose to determine what exactly took place, and for what reasons, in the moment of God’s world-generation? The difficulty here is considerable, for Mainländer takes every opportunity to tell us that his metaphysics are based on exclusively immanent grounds, to which he claims to adhere more strictly than Schopenhauer.<sup>22</sup> Mainländer’s central metaphysical argument falls into two parts.<sup>23</sup>

1. The first tells us that monism is inescapable and is achievable only on the condition that we posit a One which is transcendent, pre-mundane, and defunct. The manifold of worldly entities consists in

forces, *Kräfte*, and these must be unified, otherwise they would not necessarily interact. But we can form no concept ↵ of their unity (i.e., of a single *Urkraft*). In order to account for the immanent manifold, therefore, we must allow it a transcendent source in the past. Schopenhauer's omnipresent individuation-indifferent *Wille* is thus supplanted by a vanished One possessed of absolute simple individuality.

2. Second, Mainländer argues that, granted this pre-mundane monism, the conjecture that God has elected to disintegrate into the world for the sake of non-being, is epistemically optimal given the resources available to strictly immanent philosophical reflection; that is, the impossibility of knowing God or his motives *an sich*: all we can (and must) do is extrapolate from the character of the world as we find it, to the character of the transcendent realm, which we cannot know as a thing in itself, but only *as it relates* to the sphere of immanence. Such a metaphysics, which aims to describe the world-related "sphere of efficacy" (*Wirksamkeitssphäre*) of the transcendent realm, can only lay claim to the "as if" (*als ob*) legitimacy of Kant's regulative propositions,<sup>24</sup> yet it offers theoretical satisfaction and tells us all we need for the practical purpose of conducting our lives. Mainländer's specific reasoning for this conclusion is as follows:<sup>25</sup>

- (1) God willed (his own) non-being. [God enjoyed absolute freedom—to either be or not be<sup>26</sup>—and cannot have chosen to remain in being or to merely alter his manner of being, else no world would have come into existence.]
- (2) God's immediate passage into non-being was impeded by own being. [Had God's will directly achieved its end, then worldless non-being would presently prevail; and since nothing outside God can act on him, only God's own being could have impeded his will.]
- (3) It was consequently necessary for God's being to disintegrate into multitude, a world in which each individual being strives to achieve non-being. [Only the *finitization* of God's being will allow the end of non-being to be achieved.]
- (4) Individual worldly beings hinder one another's striving and, in so doing, weaken their degree of force (*Kraft*). [A modified Schopenhauerian image of the world as a site of conflict.]
- (5) God's entire being underwent transformation into a determinate sum total of forces (a *Kraftsumme*). [Mainländer here endorses Schopenhauer's characterization of the world as a manifold of expressions of *Wille/Kraft*, but differs in conceiving it as a finite totality.]
- (6) The world as a whole or universe has one end, non-being, which it will achieve through the continual diminution of the sum of forces which compose it. [In Schopenhauer's terms, by contrast, this an impossibility, not only because all *teloi* are precluded, but also because the world's fund of *Wille/Kraft* is enduring and inexhaustible.]
- (7) Each individual being will be brought in the course of its development, by virtue of the dissipation of its force, to a point where its striving to non-being is fulfilled. [For Schopenhauer, this outcome is possible in principle for enlightened human subjects, but not for the universe at large, as it is for Mainländer by virtue of the very laws of nature, which prescribe its own dissipation.]

p. 464 In a manner similar to Schopenhauer, Mainländer claims that this metaphysical knowledge encapsulates the true, atheistic meaning of Christianity, freed from dogmatic foundations.<sup>27</sup>



## 26.3 Bahnsen

The first volume of Bahnsen's major metaphysical work, *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt*, appeared in 1880.<sup>28</sup> The title states openly Bahnsen's principal, Hegelian-sounding thesis: there exists a contradiction within the essence of the world and our knowledge thereof. The originality and ingenuity of Bahnsen's position consists (first) in his use of Schopenhauer to give the Hegelian doctrine that contradictions inhabit the objects of knowledge (and not merely, as Kant maintained, our subjective representations) the exact opposite significance from that which Hegel intended;<sup>29</sup> and (second) in his use of Hegel's concept of dialectic to rework WWR in a way that, if Bahnsen is right, brings to light its true meaning and releases Schopenhauer from the charge of incoherence. As with Hartmann, a melding of Hegel and Schopenhauer therefore takes place in Bahnsen, but on this occasion it lies in the first instance at a metaphilosophical level, and the final product bears little resemblance to Hartmann's flat ontology.<sup>30</sup> What follows is a bare-bones reconstruction of Bahnsen's anti-rationalist monism, beginning with a point about its motivation.

We have seen how Hartmann and Mainländer seek to develop Schopenhauer's thought beyond the bounds of WWR. Also clear is the respect in which their innovations are open to challenge. It would be in order for Schopenhauer to respond as follows: no doubt there are alternative forms of *Willensmetaphysik*, which are no more exposed to the charge of strict logical inconsistency than WWR, but all that they can do, at most, is push back the point at which the possibility of explanation evaporates—thus, in Hartmann's case, we come to a halt with an original, violated duality of *Wille* and *Idee*, and in Mainländer's, with God's ontological self-decision. Such proposals complicate our metaphysical vision without gaining any insight into our situation. Philosophical economy instructs us to reject them in favor of the leaner metaphysics of WWR.

Bahnsen may be interpreted as taking his cue from the issue which has just come into view. If the metaphysics of WWR leave empty space extending beyond and behind the world as representation—which Hartmann and Mainländer not unreasonably suppose needs to be filled, and which otherwise invites the mystical pseudo-completion which Schopenhauer himself was later tempted to approve—then the solution, as long as strict immanence remains the principle of our reflection,<sup>31</sup> must be to relocate the nonrational end-of-explanation discovered by Schopenhauer *within* the world as we know it; that is, to *identify* the absolute surdity of reality exposed in WWR with the very *fabric* of the known world. In this way, instead of hiving off *Wille* and projecting it into the world's background—making it a world-independent substance—we translate *Wille* wholesale into the relational structures that constitute the world lying before us. And these, ↵ according to Bahnsen, are all instances of contradiction. The philosophical system that analyzes and exhibits them he calls *Realdialektik*.

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What makes this strategy immediately sound so peculiar—in advance of seeing how it might be executed—is the fact that, in the terms of any philosopher willing to endorse our ordinary claims to empirical objectivity, including Kant and Schopenhauer, the relational structures in question simply *are* the embeddedness (whether deep or shallow) of reason in reality, where reason entails conformity to logical principles (i.e., absence of contradiction). Indeed our very capacity to *know* the structures at all implies as much. Thus Kant's transcendental proofs seek to show that synthetic a priori principles are constitutive of appearances and that their associated categories also have thinkable application to whatever reality we cannot know, which again must be noncontradictory; whereas, according to *Fourfold Root*, reason exhausts itself in the various logically ordered, contradiction-free domains of individuated objects-as-representations.

One complaint that cannot be made of Bahnsen is that he is unaware of the peculiarity and difficulty posed by his central metaphysical claim:<sup>32</sup> throughout the work, Bahnsen takes pains to flag the numerous misunderstandings to which it is exposed and emphasizes the need to understand *Realdialektik* not as a

doctrine that we might embrace on direct conceptual or logical grounds, nor as a conclusion that we might come to in consequence of the adoption of any particular philosophical method, but rather as a position that we find ourselves backing into, under pressure from the cumulative lesson of the history of philosophy, in particular, from the experience of skepticism, Kant's Antinomies, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, and provoked by the presumption of logic.<sup>33</sup> Also of importance in securing the intelligibility of *Realdialektik* is Bahnsen's claim that its status is that of an *interpretation*, not a would-be explanation, of the world: it presents the world's pervasive meaning, testified by enlightened reflection on its physiognomy.<sup>34</sup> Bahnsen here employs the same type of hermeneutical characterization to which Schopenhauer had recourse in his attempt to explain the system of WWR.

Granted these disclaimers and points of orientation, how may it be held that Reality is Contradiction, *Urwiderspruch*, and that this is the philosophically final *truth of things*? The proposition of course makes no sense if contradiction is conceived as consisting in a relation of thoughts or judgements for, so construed, it embodies a category-mistake and fails to assert any content. Bahnsen's claim, however, is that this judgment-centered conception of the nature of contradiction is a misconception, which belongs to the grand illusion of the world's logicity. Properly understood, contradiction is a feature of *will*, which, following Schopenhauer, is what constitutes the Real. More precisely, it comprises the essential *nature* of will *as such*. All will, whether blind and object-less in the manner of Schopenhauer's *Wille* or directed to determinate objects, involves an internal dissonance or reflexive discrepancy which, when articulated in judgement form, amounts to a Yes-and-No: acts of will seek both to preserve themselves (each act of will *wills itself as such*) and to abolish themselves (in realizing their end, if they have one, and if not, then in simply coming to rest).<sup>35</sup>

p. 466 In terms of the judgment-centered view of contradiction, this conception of *conatus* as self-negating is not a (real) case of (real) contradiction, in the sense that logic precludes,  $\perp$  but rather a specific type of structure which either amounts simply to a conflict of forces or may be modeled by talking of pragmatic inconsistency and merely performative contradiction. But, as Bahnsen points out, this is hardly an objection, for what is in dispute is precisely the correct order of philosophical understanding: it is not oversight that leads him to describe the principle of *Realdialektik* as "anti-logical."<sup>36</sup>

The several argumentative paths pursued in *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt* consist chiefly in attempts to exhibit the alignment of (i) the contradictory character of will just described with (ii) structural features of objects and phenomena which have long been recognized as philosophically problematic—in particular, to take a topic at the heart of classical German philosophy, self-consciousness, the necessity of which is famously matched by its arguable paradoxicality.<sup>37</sup> Bahnsen cannot of course convert such alignments into logical or strict inferential connections—that is, he cannot show that Contradiction is the *explanation* of self-consciousness or that self-consciousness *gives proof* of the reality of Contradiction—but he can justifiably claim for them, as the instances accumulate, the kind of hermeneutical significance described earlier.

For present purposes it will be most helpful to reconstruct Bahnsen's position in relation to WWR. As noted, the upshot of *Fourfold Root* is to reduce reason to a function which constitutes domains of individuated objects, and since this exhausts its nature, reason cannot rationalize itself (i.e., explain its own production of those domains). What WWR adds to this deflation of reason is the theory that the domains are grounded in unindividuated *Wille*, which is in addition present, or expressed, within their objects. Taken singly, neither *Wille* nor the world of objects exhibits contradiction,<sup>38</sup> but Schopenhauer does accept that contradiction emerges from their *conjunction*: the world bears witness to the contradiction between individuatedness, on the side of *Vorstellung*, and its negation, on that of *Wille*. Contradiction—not as between judgments, but outside them—is therefore affirmed in Schopenhauer's philosophy as the resultant of two independent vectors, the Principle of Sufficient Reason and the will's pre-rational unity.

Now the alternative explored by Bahnsen—employing the same basic philosophical materials and agreeing with Hartmann that Schopenhauer’s Kantian subjective idealism obstructs the articulation of his insight—is to suppose that the contradiction which Schopenhauer recognizes as manifest in the constitution of the world is not the product of superimposing the Many on the One, but is rather the single original principle of all things, constituting their *Stoff* and their *Form*. This carries two advantages: it avoids the problems of Schopenhauer’s dual-layered Kantian ontology, and, in parallel, it disposes of Schopenhauer’s metaphilosophical problem since it can no longer be asked how it is possible for a single world to be thought in two mutually alien ways—the one world is thought in a single, *realdialektischen* way.<sup>39</sup> Again, Schopenhauer’s “miracle” is disposed of.<sup>40</sup>

Finally it may be urged that the supersession of WWR by *Realdialektik* was lying in wait all along: Schopenhauer presupposed the ultimate reality of contradiction when he posited a *relation* of alienness between *Wille* and *Vorstellung* for, had they not been implicitly contradictory, they would have formed the rationally transparent hylomorphic unity of Aristotle and Hegel.

## 26.4 Nietzsche

The post-Schopenhauerian school having fallen by the historical wayside, the only figure in the prevailing canon generally regarded as relaying Schopenhauer’s influence is Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s concept of the will to power is what on the surface may seem to align him directly with the three figures just discussed. However, what this supposed doctrine amounts to is much disputed—whether it amounts to a “theory” at all stands in doubt—and concentration on the relation of *Wille zum Leben* with *Wille zur Macht*, though of interest on its own account,<sup>41</sup> tells us relatively little about the general logic of the Schopenhauer-to-Nietzsche development.<sup>42</sup>

Nietzsche’s current high standing owes less to his being regarded as having conserved any substantive theses of Schopenhauer’s than to his being viewed as having followed through, in a radical way, the move which was (inadvertently) initiated and part-executed by Schopenhauer from classical German idealism to full post-metaphysicality; in other words, to Nietzsche’s having taken a further, necessary step in completing the naturalistic humiliation of reason and the world’s disenchantment. Though not false, I will suggest that this is only one part of a complex picture.

The extent of Nietzsche’s naturalistic overcoming of his predecessor is shown clearly, it may be suggested, in two places, one at each end of his *œuvre*. *The Birth of Tragedy* (*BT*; 1872) opens with a bold avowal of Schopenhauerianism, but Nietzsche also seems to allow the entire metaphysical apparatus of WWR to be boiled down to contingent psychological roots: Schopenhauer’s doctrine that the world exists as representation and as will is, in effect, recast in terms of our dual psycho-physiological capacities for dream and for ecstasy or intoxication (*Rausch*) and the artistic-cultural forms or experiential styles which result from their respective cultivation.<sup>43</sup> It would be too much to suggest that Nietzsche intends here a Humean *explaining-away* of metaphysical ideas, if only because the notion that the world conceals its own nebulous pre-individuated substrate coheres with the story that Nietzsche himself wants to tell of the meaning of tragedy; but it is clear at any rate that he does not mean to argue *from* any metaphysical truth *to* any aesthetic conclusions—what matters for Nietzsche in *BT* is the consonance of the metaphysics with aesthetic experience, irrespective of the theoretical justification of the former, our *de facto* “commitment” to which has sufficient proximal, pre-normative support in human psychology.<sup>44</sup>

Second, at the other end of his career, in the Third Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), the work which has come to be regarded as a definitive statement of Nietzsche’s mature position, Schopenhauer is singled out as an exemplary modern philosophical representative of the “ascetic ideal”—the psycho-ideational configuration which, on Nietzsche’s diagnosis, constitutes the chief precipitant of nihilism in late

modernity.<sup>45</sup> Nietzsche thus grants Schopenhauer's internal success in promoting life-denial while, at the same time, exposing his failure to understand why this aim was psychologically necessary for him in the first place and in what way the strategy of life-negation is fraudulent. Also shown, Nietzsche argues, is that, at a fundamental level, Schopenhauer endorses the same ("moral") interpretation of existence against which he pitted himself and that the secularized redemption which he offers in place of Christian theism merely entrenches the existential problem that it was intended to dissolve. From which it follows, most importantly, that at least the *possibility* of life-affirmation—its integrity as a task—remains untouched. If we focus on Nietzsche's late portrait of Schopenhauer in the *Genealogy* we are led, therefore, to view their relation as one of flat opposition.

A more nuanced and accurate picture emerges if we look at what Nietzsche originally took Schopenhauer's philosophical project and achievement to consist in.<sup>46</sup> The title of the third of Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*, "Schopenhauer as Educator" (1874), may suggest that Nietzsche intends to treat his subject from an angle that is not squarely philosophical. It becomes clear however that Nietzsche is intensely preoccupied with the question of what *counts* as genuinely philosophical understanding and that he sets no store by the narrow type of critique employed by Hartmann, Mainländer, and Bahnsen. For Nietzsche, philosophical significance is properly determined via questions of edification: the primary question is not whether Schopenhauer's system holds itself together internally in a merely logical manner, but rather what Schopenhauer's thought *expands out into*—what form of life it is capable of supporting.<sup>47</sup> And in order to answer this question, it is also necessary, Nietzsche supposes, that we comprehend the personality of the philosopher expressed in his work. Logical criticism of Schopenhauer's ideas is relocated accordingly in a context of personal appraisal: the virtues that Nietzsche ascribes to Schopenhauer, by dint of which his thought is held to edify us, are determined by how we understand him to have confronted and addressed recognizably philosophical challenges and tasks, these being in turn inseparable from (broadly) ethical matters. Thus Nietzsche contrasts Schopenhauer's success in avoiding the post-Kantian "despair of the truth"—the "gnawing and disintegrating skepticism and relativism" to which Kleist, for example, surrendered—and in having instead advanced to "the heights of tragic contemplation" from which he formed "a picture of life as a whole," a "hieroglyphics of universal life."<sup>48</sup> Again, Schopenhauer is credited by Nietzsche with having recognized, but refused to yield to, the irresolvable tension between fact and value: an achievement registered in his very *act of posing the question* of what life is worth, in which, according to Nietzsche, Schopenhauer affirms both the opposition between Ought and Is and our self-divided constitution.<sup>49</sup>

If it is asked why this kind of approach to Schopenhauer—strikingly similar to Nietzsche's Wagner appreciation<sup>50</sup>—is not too oblique and artwork-orientated to qualify as a properly philosophical appraisal, there are a number of points to be highlighted. The first is that Nietzsche had much earlier (we know from unpublished material from the 1860s) rehearsed for himself in a thorough manner, drawing on contemporary sources, a plethora of logical objections to Schopenhauer's metaphysics and that he also took himself to have found a way to sideline them, itself of Schopenhauerian inspiration.<sup>51</sup> The analytical contradictions in Schopenhauer's system, as Nietzsche details them, arise from his declaration that will is the thing in itself. This makes Schopenhauer's philosophy, which is officially immanent, transcendent. But the error is of little real consequence because the Kant-derived idiom that Schopenhauer adopts can be subtracted. This subtraction may be taken a step further by suspending the anthropomorphic character of Schopenhauer's *Wille*—at the cost, to be sure, of abandoning all claim to positive philosophical *knowledge*, but preserving intact what Nietzsche regards as Schopenhauer's crucial insights: namely his demonstration of (i) the absolute inexplicability of individuation and the origin of the intellect in a way that would validate cognition, (ii) the existence of "dark and contradictory elements in the region where individuation ends," and (iii) the necessity of rendering these aporetic discoveries in a semi-figurative form.

Nietzsche's endorsement of this strategy is clear from a letter of 1866, in which he enthuses concerning F. A. Lange's *History of Materialism* (1866), which he believes confirms Schopenhauer's illusionism regarding empirical knowledge and thereby shows there to be scope for a type of supra-cognitive reflection which can validate itself in the manner of a work of art—a type of discourse which he takes Schopenhauer's artwork-like philosophy to exemplify.

Thus the true essence of things—the thing-in-itself—is not only unknown to us; the concept of it is neither more nor less than the final product of an antithesis which is determined by our organization, an antithesis of which we do not know whether it has any meaning outside our experience or not. Consequently, Lange thinks, one should give the philosophers a free hand as long as they edify us in this sense. Art is free, also in the domain of concepts. Who would refute a phrase by Beethoven, and who would find error in Raphael's *Madonna*?

You see, even with this strictly critical standpoint our Schopenhauer stands firm; he becomes even almost more important to us. If philosophy is art, then even Haym should submit himself to Schopenhauer; if philosophy should edify, I know no more edifying philosopher than our Schopenhauer.<sup>52</sup>

If Beethoven's music is "irrefutable," then a fortiori it lays claim to veracity of some sort, and the same must hold for Schopenhauer's edifying discourse. Now it may of course be asked what, if anything, sustains this aesthetico-aporetic conception of philosophical discourse, as it might be called, but the question is not strictly relevant to the exegetical issue of Nietzsche's Schopenhauer reception. The fact is that Nietzsche committed himself to at a very early point, and never abandoned, the Schopenhauer-inspired *idea* of philosophy as a form of reflection which is (a) categorically committed to the value of truthfulness, (b) axiologically orientated, (c) distinct from and elevated above empirical science, and which (d) by virtue of its supra-empirical status allows itself to be counted as metaphysical *at least* in the sense that it corresponds to what man *experiences* as such: "the truthful man feels that the meaning of his activity is metaphysical."<sup>53</sup>

p. 470 Whether Nietzsche ever succeeded in rationalizing this complex set of commitments or in showing how we can be cured of our metaphysical need may be doubted, and there is abundant evidence that his thoughts on the matter remained unsettled. *Untimely Meditations* praises Schopenhauer for having "liberated philosophical life," as Kant failed to do, by showing the philosopher how to "unlearn" "pure knowledge" and thereby continue to exist as a human being.<sup>54</sup> In *Human, All Too Human* (1878), belonging to Nietzsche's so-called positivistic phase, when he had ceased to regard approximation to art as a sufficient measure of philosophical correctness and begun to criticize Schopenhauer, Schopenhauer's teachings are said to be only half-heartedly *wissenschaftlich* and thus to show how much further the scientific spirit needs to go. At the same time, the nonscientificity of Schopenhauer's mode of contemplation remains invaluable, for without it we would be unable to see modernity for what it is. This equivocation is repeated in Nietzsche's general remarks on philosophy in this text: it is, on the one hand, "the summit of the entire scientific pyramid," yet it also stands in antagonism to "the individual regions of science," having separated itself from them by posing the question of how knowledge might contribute to human happiness. This has had the malign effect of inhibiting empirical enquiry. But without philosophy's ("involuntary") raising of the question of the value of knowledge, we would remain under the tyranny of logic, which is "by its nature optimism."<sup>55</sup> In a still later work, *The Gay Science* (1882), Schopenhauer's supremacy is restored: among Germans, Schopenhauer alone exhibits an "unconditional and honest atheism," grounded on his apprehension of the "ungodliness of existence," "as something given, palpable, indisputable"; whatever vestigial Christian asceticism may be found in him, Schopenhauer at least grasped this new problem.<sup>56</sup>

What seems an outright condemnation in the late *Genealogy* is to that extent continuous with Nietzsche's early attempt to relieve Schopenhauer's metaphysical idiom of its customary weight-bearing function, fueled by a new appreciation of how much hangs on overcoming all attachment to other-worldliness.

The arc of Nietzsche's development begins with his absorbing Schopenhauer's terms of philosophical reflection, and, if in the final act, Nietzsche seems to turn the tables on him, this results from his having attempted to follow through on the task he originally supposed Schopenhauer to have set: that is, of reconceiving philosophy's relation to *Wissenschaft* once its pretensions to rational necessity have been seen through. And if no clear redefinition of philosophy emerges from Nietzsche's own writings, this may be regarded, in his own terms, as a proper consequence of the fact that, as he puts it, "a few centuries will be needed" before Schopenhauer's great question, "Does existence have any meaning at all?," can even be "heard completely and in its full depth."<sup>57</sup>

From this standpoint, to suppose, as do Hartmann, Mainländer, and Bahnsen, that Schopenhauer's substantive axiological question can be answered by salvaging his philosophy *qua* theoretical system is to fail to understand him. In terms of the schema I proposed at the beginning, Nietzsche's resolution of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophical quandary is therefore to give precedence to (B2): the problem of the wrongness of the world—which for Nietzsche means the problem of how *we* are—takes precedence over theoretical reflection.

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## 26.5 Appendix: Freud's Post-Metaphysical Revalidation of Post-Schopenhauerian Metaphysics

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The naturalistic commitments heavily on display in Nietzsche are of course generally characteristic of much late nineteenth-century thought, and they are also strongly present in another hugely influential thinker standardly regarded as relaying Schopenhauer's legacy, namely Freud. Freud's doctrinal convergences with Schopenhauer, along with the thorny question of his actual indebtedness to him, have been discussed in many places, but there is one particular text, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (BPP), Freud's most speculative work, in which not merely the letter but also the deep spirit of Schopenhauer is manifest.

Toward the end of BPP Freud acknowledges that he has "unwittingly steered" into "the harbour of Schopenhauer's philosophy."<sup>58</sup> What he here admits to be Schopenhauerian is the notion that the necessity of death figures *teleologically* in the constitution of human beings, who are not merely finite in life-span, like all organisms, but also death-*directed*.<sup>59</sup> Though Freud's theory of the death drive, among all of his theoretical proposals, has met with fierce opposition, even (or especially) from those who are otherwise sympathetic to psychoanalytic explanation, the consensus is nonetheless that BPP presents a case to be answered,<sup>60</sup> and its deeply Schopenhauerian character makes it appropriate to conclude this chapter with a rehearsal of Freud's circuitous but fascinating argument—if only to show how, in counterbalance to what is widely regarded as Nietzsche's naturalistic deconstruction of Schopenhauer, it is possible to make one's way back, via scientifically orientated psychological theory, to a standpoint which mirrors Schopenhauerian *Willensmetaphysik*.

Freud does not, of course, regard himself as having the aim of metaphysical recuperation. On the contrary, at each point in BPP where problems of psychological explanation are said to favor a certain hypothesis, Freud turns to current biological literature for verification, and repeatedly he concedes that the answers he seeks are quite possibly reserved for future biological science. Like Hartmann, Freud takes himself to be engaged in scientific extrapolation from empirical data, though without Hartmann's expectation that scientific inference will lead us into metaphysics.

The official *explanandum* of BPP is the well-attested failure of human behavior to accord comprehensively with the supposition that we are motivated by pleasure, if possible within the constraints of reality and if not then at its expense. From this can be inferred the existence of a drive which is independent from, and capable of overriding, the pleasure principle. Freud acknowledges that the data which support its



postulation are not conclusive—as was to be expected in light of psychoanalysis’s success in showing that what appears to merely befall us against our wishes in fact stems from them—yet he insists that it cannot be disregarded: the fact, which clinical practice puts into sharp focus, is that much of what we do is nonsensical if viewed as directed toward pleasure; we are, as it were, so bad at achieving happiness that it cannot be what we most want, or all that we want.

p. 472 Having granting himself the assumption of a hedonically indifferent drive, Freud argues that, if it is to explain what (psychoanalysis shows) is specifically needed, then it must be regarded as having as its aim the destruction, decomposition, or disaggregation of its object into its original compositional units (i.e., the “restoration of an earlier state”).<sup>61</sup> Now such a drive, Freud notes, appears to conflict directly with the sexual instincts, which are directed toward growth. This naturally leads us into a motivational dualism: on the one hand, we have a death-seeking ego, on the other, a libido which seeks the life of the species. This picture is however unsatisfactory, Freud argues, if only because it fails to explain how the two drives might fuse, as they are observed to do in (for example) sadism and masochism. More generally, the manifest failure of human motivation to form a coherent, Good-seeking whole means that no straightforward motivational monism is credible—Freud dismisses Jung’s rival conception of the unconscious as seeking the unitary goal of its own developmental perfection. And yet some way must be found to mediate the dualism to which we have been led.

What must be supposed, Freud argues, is that the sexual instinct *too* seeks the restoration of an earlier state of affairs—namely, a return to a condition of sexual *indistinction*, the desired wholeness of which Aristophanes speaks in Plato’s *Symposium*. And this induces us, Freud continues, to reexamine our original assumption that the death drive conflicts with the pleasure principle. Pleasure-seeking, he points out, may be interpreted as yet another form of the very same drive, in so far as it, too, can be regarded as consisting in a discharge of energy in the cause of reducing tension; that is, as an attempt to achieve a null state (as Freud had in fact postulated in his own, pre-psychoanalytic model of the mental apparatus in 1895). And if this is correct, then *all* drive seeks the restoration of an earlier state of the organism; *Trieb* as such is *nothing but* a striving to restore a lost equilibrium.

What is this earlier state? It can only be, Freud argues, the equilibrium of *inorganic* existence, “the quiescence of the inorganic world.”<sup>62</sup> Achieving this condition can have no truly positive character since it is merely the removal of a disturbance, the negation of life’s own negation of the inorganic.<sup>63</sup> The necessity of reverting to the organic does not therefore qualify as an “aim” in the sense that Freud had originally postulated *Ziele* as place-holders for objects,<sup>64</sup> nor can it be said that death is the final target of desire in the sense of being what we *most want* (i.e., what would fulfil or *satisfy* us). The upshot nonetheless is that desiring *as such* has the single end of its own cancellation: this is the inexorable law to which it is subject, which provides desire’s sufficient explanation and for which no reason can be given. The resonance with Schopenhauerian metaphysics is evident.

As said, Freud does not regard his theory as having conceptual grounds, but it is fair to observe that the necessity which he believes himself to have uncovered is barely warranted by direct needs of empirical explanation (as he himself comes close to admitting). It may be suggested accordingly that, despite his nominally natural-scientific agenda, the overall trajectory of BPP is determined by a *non*-empirical interest in *ultimate* explanation. In contrast with empirical psychology’s standard concentration on particular ↵ cognitive competences, Freud’s starting point is sheer puzzlement at the *very phenomenon* of human desire and agency, in all of its manifest, humanity-defining incoherence. This is by any measure a philosophical matter. The aim of BPP is to show that, confronted with this great puzzle, there is no alternative to the conception of drive as self-erasing: the explanation of human desire—to put the point in a way that echoes the paradox of Schopenhauer’s metaphilosophy and Bahnsen’s *Realdialektik*—is that it *has no* ultimate explanation. What Freud may be said to have done, in sum, is to have elaborated Schopenhauer’s thesis in light of the a posteriori results of clinical work, which display the multiform negativity of human mental life

in ways that Schopenhauer at most guessed at.<sup>65</sup> In propounding the idea that desire as such is groundless and has no other “aim” than its own extinction—that its fundamental character is one of undoing rather than creation and that individuation is essentially self-dismantling—BPP reasserts the Schopenhauerian metaphysical vision.

## Notes

1. Frederick Beiser. *Weltschmerz: Pessimism in German Philosophy, 1860–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 18–19. As the title indicates, Beiser addresses the broader pessimism debate in all of its dimensions. The present chapter has a narrower focus.
2. See my “Schopenhauer’s Metaphilosophy: How to Think a World Without Reason,” in *Schopenhauer’s Fourfold Root*, edited by Jonathan Head and Dennis Vanden Auweele (London: Routledge, 2017), 11–31.
3. Anglophone literature on which is scarce. Beiser, in *Weltschmerz*, chs. 7, 9 and 10, gives excellent accounts of the metaphysics of Hartmann, Mainländer, and Bahnsen. For recent treatments, see *Schopenhauer und die Schopenhauer-Schule*, edited by Fabio Ciraci, Domenico Fazio, and Matthias Koßler (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009), Abt. II. Susanna Rubinstein, *Eine Trias von Willensmetaphysikern. Populär-philosophische Essays* (Leipzig: Alexander Edelman, 1896), provides an early appreciative overview of the school.
4. All regard Schopenhauer’s employment of transcendental idealism—Kant’s distinctions of empirical/transcendental and of appearance/thing-in-itself—as failing to resolve the problem he has brought to light. The realism of each is very different, but none can be said to correspond to that of the natural attitude; rather, they recall the non-commonsensical revisionary realism of Leibniz. In Kant’s terms, all three qualify as transcendental realists.
5. Hartmann’s Hegel-Schopenhauer synthesis is expositied in many places: see *Philosophy of the Unconscious: Speculative Results According to the Inductive Method of Physical Science*, translated by William Chatterton Coupland (London: Trübner & Co., 1884), 3 vols. [*Philosophie des Unbewussten. Speculative Resultate nach inductiv-naturwissenschaftlicher Methode* (original subtitle, in 1st ed. [Berlin: Carl Duncker, 1869]: *Versuch einer Weltanschauung*)], esp. vol. I, 16–42; vol. I (A), ch. 4, 117–26; vol. II, 55–61; and vol. III, ch. 15, 143–204.
6. See *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, vol. I, Introductory: General Preliminary Observations.
7. Hartmann’s balancing act, it has been noted, bears comparison with Leibniz.
8. *Das Ding an sich und seine Beschaffenheit. Kantische Studien zur Erkenntnistheorie und Metaphysik* (Berlin: Carl Duncker, 1871), 29–33.
9. See WWR1<sub>[p]</sub>, 102 and WWR2<sub>[p]</sub>, 497.
- p. 474 10. “Ueber die nothwendige Umbildung der Schopenhauerschen Philosophie,” in *Gesammelte philosophische Abhandlungen zur Philosophie des Unbewussten* (Berlin, Carl Dunker, 1872), 57–70, esp. 60–66.
11. “Ueber die nothwendige Umbildung der Hegel’schen Philosophie,” in *Gesammelte philosophische Abhandlungen zur Philosophie des Unbewussten* (Berlin, Carl Dunker, 1872), 25–56.
12. *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, vol. III, ch. 14, 120–42.
13. See *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, vol. II, 271–74, and vol. III, 125–27.
14. See *Schelling’s Positive Philosophie als Einheit von Hegel und Schopenhauer* (Berlin: O. Loewenstein, 1869) and *Schelling’s Philosophisches System* (Leipzig: Hermann Haacke, 1897).
15. See *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, vol. III, ch. 14, 120–42.
16. *Die Philosophie der Erlösung* [vol. I] (Berlin: Theobald Grieben, 1876), viii, 401, 465, 621. What is referred to as volume II of *Die Philosophie der Erlösung. Zwölf philosophische Essays* was published posthumously (Frankfurt am Main: C. Koenitzer, 1886).



17. Which Kant claims to solve in the Solutions to the Third and Fourth Antinomies on the basis of a form of transcendental idealism which, as noted earlier, Mainländer rejects. Mainländer's realism (though described as "genuine transcendental or critical idealism") is asserted in *Die Philosophie der Erlösung*, 23–24 and 40–41: things in themselves are forces and have full, subject-independent empirical reality; "objects" are appearances of things in themselves but do not falsify them; the world is a sum of things in themselves.
18. *Die Philosophie der Erlösung*, 325.
19. *Ibid.*, 465.
20. Of importance here are the remarks on explanation, causality, and development: see *Ibid.*, 25–26.
21. Mainländer has another argument for conjoining God and world, one that turns on his ingenious identification of reason rather than understanding—Kantian *Vernunft*, with all of its associated strong commitments, rather than mere *Verstand*—as the faculty of synthesis: from which it follows that ordinary empirical knowledge requires, and warrants, world-transcendence. Compare Schopenhauer's contraction of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, in *Fourfold Root*, to a purely intra-worldly function.
22. *Die Philosophie der Erlösung*, e.g., 3, 603, 605. Note also Mainländer's avowal of methodological solipsism, 42–43. The Appendix contains detailed critical analysis of Schopenhauer's entire system, the major weaknesses of which (in Mainländer's view) are listed at 604.
23. The core argument can be gleaned from §§24–26 of the first chapter, "Analytik des Erkenntnisvermögens" (27–30), in conjunction with §§1–7 of the final chapter, "Metaphysik" (319–27).
24. Here lies one point of disagreement with Hartmann, who is subjected to extended critique in *Die Philosophie der Erlösung*, vol. II, Essay 12.
25. What follows is a loose paraphrase, with annotation, of the argument laid out formally in *Die Philosophie der Erlösung*, 326–27.
26. The notion that God's freedom precedes his being derives from Schelling, who does not however entertain the possibility that God might will non-being. An early expositor of Schelling noted but dismissed it as nonsensical: Hubert Beckers, *Historisch-kritische Erläuterungen zu Schelling's Abhandlungen* (Munich: Akademie Verlag, 1858), 5.
27. See *Die Philosophie der Erlösung*, vi, 222–23. Concerning Schopenhauer and Christianity, see Christopher Janaway's contribution to the chapter 16 in this volume.
28. *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt. Princip und Einzelbewährung der Realdialektik*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Theobald Grieben, 1880–82). Bahnsen's earlier *Beiträge zur Charakterologie* (Leipzig: J. A. Brockhaus, 1867), a theory of human personality, also took its lead from Schopenhauer.
29. How Hegel really meant it to be understood is of course moot and much discussed. Bahnsen at any rate interprets Hegel as (i) reducing dialectic to a mere *means* by which truth is to be determined, (ii) ultimately subordinating contradiction to *identity*, and (iii) offering a merely *Verbaldialektik*. See *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt*, vol. I, 1 and 4–7.
30. Hartmann gives short shrift to the notion of dialectical method: see "Ueber die nothwendige Umbildung der Hegel'schen Philosophie" and the Preface to the second edition of his *Über die dialektische Methode. Historisch-kritische Untersuchungen* (Südharz: Hermann Haacke, 1910).
31. See *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt*, vol. I, 94.
32. See *Ibid.*, vol. I, 29, 45–46, 58–66, 92, 103.
33. See *Ibid.*, vol. I, 2–3, 16–26, 29.
34. See *Ibid.*, vol. I, 27–32.
35. See *Ibid.*, vol. I, 47, 51, 53, 54–5.
36. See *Ibid.*, vol. I, 66–72.

37. Roughly the first half of volume II of *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt* is devoted to the structural contradictions of selfhood; see esp. 10–21. The second half of volume I, a “Doctrine of Being,” locates contradiction in the physical world.
38. I am skipping over complications of Schopenhauer exegesis. Does Schopenhauer suppose there to be an inner antagonism in *Wille*, independently of and prior to its objectification in Ideas and/or in the world-as-representation? If so, Bahnsen is elaborating rather than revising Schopenhauer, but the discussion in WWR1, §§27–29, seems to me (on balance) to suggest not: the decisive issue is whether or not will’s *Selbstentzweigung* is anything over and above its “hunger” and “striving,” and the evidence for this is faint.
39. There is scope for comparison and contrast of Bahnsen with F. H. Bradley, for whom contradictoriness is also (though for different reasons) world-constitutive, but who, unlike Bahnsen, ultimately sublates relational structure into a contradictionless monism.
40. See *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt*, vol. I, 35.
41. See, e.g., Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).
42. Similar remarks apply to Nietzsche’s conservation of Schopenhauer’s thesis of the primacy of will over cognition: determination of belief by will is metaphysically explained and rationally transparent for Schopenhauer, not so for Nietzsche.
43. *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), §§1–2. Some such deflation is arguably prefigured in Nietzsche’s early notes on Schopenhauer: “The will appears: how could it appear? Or to ask differently: where does the apparatus of representation in which the will appears come from?,” whence Nietzsche turns directly to Schopenhauer’s notion of brain development (*Writings from the Early Notebooks* (1867–1873), edited by Raymond Geuss and Alexander Nehamas, translated by Ladislaus Löb [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 6).
44. I owe this point—that Schopenhauer’s metaphysics do matter for *BT*, even though the question of their reality may to some extent be bracketed—to Tom Stern.
45. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, §§5–6.
46. See *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche’s Educator*, edited by Christopher Janaway, especially Janaway’s “Schopenhauer as Nietzsche’s Educator,” 13–36.
47. Thus Nietzsche admits to having found only “a little error” in Schopenhauer: “Schopenhauer as Educator,” in *Untimely Meditations* (1873–1876), translated by R. J. Hollingdale, edited by Daniel Breazale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134.
- p. 476 48. *Ibid.*, 140–42.
49. *Ibid.*, 146, 158–59. On Nietzsche’s construal—which is highly tendentious and helps to explain how he could have regarded *The Birth of Tragedy* as authentically Schopenhauerian—Schopenhauer regards “heroism” as of supreme value, life-affirmative and life-justifying, indifferent to happiness, and as expressed aesthetically in specific cultural forms (pp. 146, 152–55).
50. The Schopenhauer-Wagner parallel is drawn in “Schopenhauer as Educator,” 137.
51. “October 1867–April 1868: On Schopenhauer,” in *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, 1–8.
52. To Carl von Gersdorff (end of August 1866), in *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Christopher Middleton (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1969), 18.
53. “Schopenhauer as Educator,” 153.
54. *Ibid.*, 137.
55. *Human, All Too Human* (1878), translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), §§6–7 (14–15), §26 (25–26), §110 (61–63). Indicative of this complexity are the subtle variations in Nietzsche’s view of Schopenhauer’s

proximity to the idealism of Schelling and Hegel: compare *Daybreak* (1881) §190 and §197, *The Gay Science* (1872) §370, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) §252, and *The Case of Wagner* (1888) §10.

56. *The Gay Science*, edited by Bernard Williams, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), §357, 219. Nietzsche tells us that his post-Schopenhauerian competitors, Hartmann, Mainländer, and Bahnsen, each in his own way fail to grasp Schopenhauer's problem.
57. *The Gay Science* §357, 219.
58. Freud XVIII, 49–50. References, by volume and page number, are to the *Standard Edition* of Freud's works in 24 volumes, edited by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953).
59. Freud quotes Schopenhauer's statement that death is the "true result and to that extent the purpose of life" (XVIII, 50). Freud might of course equally have referred to Mainländer. Elsewhere it is instead the ubiquity and force of sexual motivation which leads Freud to associate himself with Schopenhauer: see the Preface to the Fourth Edition of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), VII, 134; "A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis" (1917), XVII, 143–44; "The Resistances to Psycho-Analysis" (1925), XIX, 218; and *An Autobiographical Study* (1925), XX, 59–60.
60. See Paul Ricœur's penetrating discussion in *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, translated by Denis Savage (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 281–338. It will become clear that I do not concur with Ricœur's Goethean reading of Freud's *Naturphilosophie*.
61. Freud XVIII, 37. The conclusion, along with much of the supporting reasoning, is later recapitulated with minor modification in Freud's *New Introductory Lectures* (1933), Lecture 32: XXII, 103–08.
62. Freud XVIII, 62.
63. For the existence of which Freud offers no real explanation. His puzzling suggestion, which is tucked into a footnote and vaguely recalls Hartmann, is that "the riddle of life" might be solved "by supposing that the two instincts [Eros and the death drive] were struggling with each other from the very first" (XVIII, 60n1).
64. See *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915), XI, 122–23, and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), VII, 135–36.
- p. 477 65. But that are continuous with Bahnsen, who describes our innate capacity for taking pleasure in "antithetical negativity" as bearing witness to the truth of *Realdialektik* (*Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt*, vol. I, 37).

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