

## Schopenhauer's Deconstruction of German Idealism

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### Introduction

Arthur Schopenhauer occupies a central position in the narrative of nineteenth-century philosophy: though first and foremost an idealist, Schopenhauer belongs also to its naturalistic current, and with regard to many other central tendencies of the age – including the turn towards the practical, at the expense of the early modern image of man as reality-reflecting reason, the elevation of art to a position of near parity with philosophy, and the exploration of proxies for traditional religion – Schopenhauer again occupies a pivotal role; in a way that deserves to be found puzzling, Schopenhauer provides the key connecting link of Kant with Nietzsche.<sup>1</sup> My aim here is to consider

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<sup>1</sup> The main broad feature of nineteenth-century thought *not* exhibited by Schopenhauer – and which he in fact opposes vigorously – is its historical turn: see *The World as Will and Representation* [1st edn. 1819; 2nd edn., revised and enlarged, 2 volumes, 1844], 2 vols., trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), Vol. I, pp. 273–274. Further references to this work are abbreviated *WWR*, followed by volume and page number. References to other writings of Schopenhauer's are given by the following abbreviations and are to the editions cited below:

*BM*            *Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals* [1840], in *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, trans. David E. Cartwright and Edward E. Erdmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

*FR*            *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* [1st edn. 1813, 2nd edn. 1847], 2nd edn. trans. E. F. J. Payne (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1974).

*FW*            *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will* [1839], in *The Two Fundamental*

Schopenhauer's philosophy from the perspective of German Idealism, an approach which, I will try to show, takes us to the heart of his project and allows us to understand how a philosopher only one step removed from the philosophy of the Enlightenment could provide crucial impetus to late modern anti-rationalism.

Some preliminary remarks are needed concerning this contextualization. Schopenhauer's intention was not of course to provide simply a critique of German Idealism, but rather to present a

*Problems of Ethics*, trans. David E. Cartwright and Edward E. Erdmann  
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

*MREM* *Manuscript Remains: Early Manuscripts (1804–1818)*, ed. Arthur Hübscher,  
trans. E. F. J. Payne, *Manuscript Remains in Four Volumes*, Vol. 1 (New  
York: Berg, 1988).

*MRCB* *Manuscript Remains: Critical Debates (1809–1818)*, ed. Arthur Hübscher,  
trans. E. F. J. Payne, *Manuscript Remains in Four Volumes*, Vol. 2 (New  
York: Berg, 1988).

*PP* *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short Philosophical Essays* [1851], 2 vols.,  
trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974).

*VgP* *Vorlesung über die gesammte Philosophie d.i. Die Lehre vom Wesen der  
Welt und von dem menschlichen Geiste. In vier Theilen. Erster Theil: Theorie  
des gesammten Vorstellen, Denkens und Erkennens*, in *Theorie des  
gesammten Vorstellens, Denkens und Erkennens. Aus dem handschriftlichen  
Nachlaß* [1820], hrsg. u. eingeleitet von Volker Spierling (München: Piper,  
1986).

*WN* *On the Will in Nature: A Discussion of the Corroborations from the  
Empirical Sciences that the Author's Philosophy has Received Since its First  
Appearance* [1836], ed. David E. Cartwright, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford:  
Berg, 1991).

self-standing, independently intelligible system, the grounds of which are contained in basic facts of consciousness and accessible to anyone who is able and willing to reflect on these in the unobscured light of Kant's first *Critique*. Nor again is Schopenhauer's target – the world-view he intends his system to confute – identified narrowly with the positions of Fichte, Schelling, or Hegel: it comprises, much more broadly, the dominant tendency operative within all the major schools of Western philosophy, namely, their directedness towards an *optimistic* solution to the riddle of the existence of the world.

It is possible, therefore, to detach Schopenhauer's philosophy from all consideration of German Idealism, or to consider it, as much commentary does, only in relation to Kant and Nietzsche, but there are sound reasons for instead understanding his system abreactively – as in the first instance an attempt to simultaneously undermine, appropriate, and recast the legacy of German Idealism. It is a matter of historical record that Schopenhauer in the earliest years of his philosophical formation had extensive exposure to the lectures and writings of Fichte and Schelling, with whom he engages more closely in his early notebooks than with any other figures in the history of philosophy with the exception of Kant.<sup>2</sup> Approaching Schopenhauer with this in mind allows better sense to be made of Schopenhauer's ideas than can be got simply by placing them directly alongside Kant's, Schopenhauer's departures from whom often seem oddly under-motivated:<sup>3</sup> Schopenhauer's return *to* Kant is a return *from* German Idealism, conducted in light of

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<sup>2</sup> On Schopenhauer's early years, see Arthur Hübscher, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer in its Intellectual Context: Thinker against the Tide*, trans. Joachim T. Baer and David E. Cartwright (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989), Chs. 5–6, and David E. Cartwright, *Schopenhauer: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Ch. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Janaway, in *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 141–142, similarly affirms the need to set Schopenhauer in historical context in order to understand his departures from Kant. For analyses of Schopenhauer's epistemology and metaphysics, see, in addition to Janaway, Julian Young, *Willing and Unwilling: A*

its misconstrual (as he perceives it) of Kant's thought. It is of course in relation to Kant alone that Schopenhauer asks for his system to be considered, but we can understand without difficulty the reasons why Schopenhauer would have wished to write German Idealism out of his philosophical ancestry.<sup>4</sup> German Idealism represents for Schopenhauer the culmination of the optimistic tendency of Western philosophy and theology, which it equips with the most advanced modern articulation,<sup>5</sup> its distinctive historical position consisting in its having recognized the profound and original advance made by Critical philosophy yet perversely refused to grasp its anti-optimistic vector.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Schopenhauer's central metaphysical claims allow themselves to be understood as negations of key claims in German Idealism.

Schopenhauer's philosophy represents, I therefore suggest, the result of an attempt to as it were re-run the post-Kantian development – the attempt beginning in the 1790s to fix Kant's problems – on the basis of a *rejection* of two crucial assumptions of Fichte and Schelling. The first of these is their reaffirmation of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), to which they grant unrestricted scope and authority. The second concerns the value of our existence and that of the world, which is held, following Kant, to be secured by the moral Fact of Reason, meaning that value in general is grounded on freedom and enters the world primordially through the exercise of pure practical reason. On the basis of his controversion of these two fundamental assumptions, Schopenhauer inverts the significance of the concepts which he, completing his own extension of Kant's philosophy, borrows from Fichte and Schelling.

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*Study in the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987) and *Schopenhauer* (London: Routledge, 2005), and John E. Atwell, *Schopenhauer on the Character of the World: The Metaphysics of Will* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> As he does explicitly at *WWR* I, 416, and *PP* I, 132.

<sup>5</sup> *WWR* II, 644–645: all German Idealism is Spinozistic, and therefore optimistic.

<sup>6</sup> See *MREM*, 13: Kant exposed the contradictions in the lie which is life.

The net result is a system which has much of the formal structure and outward appearance of the German Idealist systems but a directly contrary import. Schopenhauer does not quite affirm the thoroughly disenchanted view of the world that the German Idealists attempted to show need not be accepted as the price of modernity, but the residue of enchantment which he allows to continue to attach to our existence is relocated outside the objectual world, in the form of its negation: the world itself inherits the 'nothingness', the 'lack of an ultimate purpose or object' and 'absence of all aim', of its metaphysical ground.<sup>7</sup> Though Schopenhauer officially repudiates the Spinozistic nihilism that F. H. Jacobi warns of as the inevitable upshot of Kantianism<sup>8</sup> – on the somewhat thin basis that his doctrine of the negation of the world endows it with (inverted) moral-metaphysical significance<sup>9</sup> – his proximity to it can hardly be exaggerated: Schopenhauer reaffirms Spinoza's anti-theism, determinism, materialist tendency, naturalistic view of human motivation, and reductionist account of value.

## **I. Schopenhauer's strategy**

### 1. Contraction of the Principle of Sufficient Reason

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<sup>7</sup> *WWR* I, 149, 164.

<sup>8</sup> The 'notion that the world has merely a physical, and no moral, significance is the most deplorable error that has sprung from the greatest perversity of mind' (*PP* II, 102). Schopenhauer distinguishes his position from the 'Neo-Spinozism' described by Jacobi at *WWR* II, 645–646.

<sup>9</sup> See Schopenhauer's claim to have solved the age-old problem of demonstrating 'a *moral* world-order as the basis of the *physical*', *WWR* II, 590–591.

The first part of Schopenhauer's strategy is presented in *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, his first publication and a work to which he frequently refers back, declaring its conclusions to be presupposed by the argument of *WWR*.<sup>10</sup>

*Fourfold Root* presents itself in the first instance as a historical review conjoined with a systematic analysis of PSR, but it is clear from the outset that it is not intended as a neutral account of the different ways in which PSR has been invoked or may be understood. The work's chief concern is to show, negatively, that confusions of different senses of ground or reason (*Grund*) have played a decisive role in metaphysical reasoning, and, positively, to offer a radically original, minimal account of the principle's content.<sup>11</sup> Schopenhauer identifies PSR with the conjunction of four principles: (i) the law of causality, requiring changes in real objects to have efficient causes; (ii) the condition on true judgement, that it have a ground outside itself; (iii) the mutual determination of all parts of space and time; and (iv) the law of motivation governing acts of will. Characteristically metaphysicians have confused the first two, especially in proofs of God's existence, reflecting their illicit conviction that the order of things is in essence that of thought.<sup>12</sup>

The full force of Schopenhauer's devaluation of PSR becomes clear in his nominalist answer to the question whether it constitutes one principle or many. Though drawn at times to talk of a unitary *Grund* 'presenting itself in a fourfold aspect',<sup>13</sup> ultimately Schopenhauer rejects the notion of a 'ground in general', *einen Grund überhaupt*,<sup>14</sup> reducing PSR to an aggregate and leaving no scope

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<sup>10</sup> E.g. *WWR* I, xiv.

<sup>11</sup> The critical intention becomes more pronounced in the amplified second edition of 1847, but is clear even in the first (1813).

<sup>12</sup> *FR* 14–16, 18–19, 228–229.

<sup>13</sup> *FR*, 162–163, 232.

<sup>14</sup> *FR*, 234. See also *FR*, 2–4, 231; *WWR* II, 641; and *VgP*, 494. I discuss *Fourfold Root* in more detail in Sebastian Gardner, 'Schopenhauer's Contraction of Reason: Clarifying Kant and Undoing German Idealism', *Kantian Review* 17, 2012, 375–401, Section 3.

for the formation of a novel, non-empirical conception of *Grund* such as those freely employed by the German Idealists.<sup>15</sup> The concept of reason in general or as such becomes a mere abstraction; what unifies the four principles is simply their fundamental character and epistemic immanence, i.e., our knowledge of them as constituting the form of objects within the world as representation. It follows that PSR extends only to the phenomenon, not to the thing in itself or 'inner essence' of things, to which it is entirely 'foreign'.<sup>16</sup> The implications of its contraction are, as Schopenhauer at one place spells them out: that '*the laws of the faculty of reason are not absolute laws*'; that 'there is just as little unconditioned as conditioned, just as little God as world'; that the question how the world and nature have arisen can be likened to 'the talking of one who is still half in a dream'; and that in the realm beyond nature 'there is really no why and no wherefore'.<sup>17</sup>

Schopenhauer's contraction of PSR goes hand in hand with his *concept empiricism*, according to which concepts arise only from intuitive representations, formed by abstraction from immediately given data in much the way that British empiricism tells us.<sup>18</sup> This avoids returning us to Hume's denial of all objective necessity, as an orthodox Kantian might object, because on Schopenhauer's account experience itself – intuitive representation, in his terminology – contains seams of necessity, defined by the four sub-forms of PSR.<sup>19</sup> Where Schopenhauer departs from

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<sup>15</sup> See *FR*, 234.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. *WWR* I, 128, 163; *WWR* II, 579; *PP* II, 94.

<sup>17</sup> *MBCD*, 430–431.

<sup>18</sup> '[I]f we wish to call any concept *objective*, then it must be one which demonstrates its origin and object in sensuous feeling (the five senses)' (*MBCD*, 357); 'concepts have no meaning other than their relation to intuitive representations (whose representatives they are)' (*MBCD*, 471). See also *FR*, 15, 146–148; *WWR* I, 39–42; and *MBCD*, 298–299, 468.

<sup>19</sup> To clarify their relation: Schopenhauer's account of PSR does not presuppose and is not argued for *via* his concept empiricism. Schopenhauer's concept empiricism, however, is not independent of his account of PSR, since this is presupposed by his account of the intuitive representations from

Kant is in his claim is that no independently originating concepts are *brought to* the data of intuition or are required to *make possible* cognition of objects. And this denial of the pre-existence of concepts in any form, along with the impossibility of forming new concepts not already implicated in PSR-structured experience, is taken by Schopenhauer to entail the *strict meaninglessness* of any employment of concepts outside the domain of representation. The scope which Kant allowed to remain for employment of the unschematized categories – to provide the necessary foundation for our thought of problematic objects, Ideas of reason, and exercise of pure practical reason – is thereby eliminated: conceptuality and the world as representation are rendered co-extensive, and the Kantian faculty of reason is collapsed into the understanding. Schopenhauer supports this conclusion by arguing that Kant's central argument for the necessity of differentiating *Vernunft* from *Verstand*, the Antinomy of Pure Reason, is bogus.<sup>20</sup>

What drove Schopenhauer to this major departure from Kantian doctrine – and indeed to focus, in his very first work, on an officially antiquated piece of philosophical apparatus with unmistakable Leibnizian-Wolffian connotations – is his perception of what inevitably happens when PSR is allowed to remain in the partially deflated yet fundamentally intact state that Kant leaves it in: to wit, the spectacular reinflation which it receives at the hands of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.<sup>21</sup> After Kant had reduced the positive epistemic significance of PSR to (i) the principle of

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which concepts are formed. What concept empiricism adds to the contraction of PSR is the closing of a loophole which the transcendent post-Kantian might seek to exploit, viz., the possibility of novel conceptual construction.

<sup>20</sup> The theses of all four antinomies are, Schopenhauer argues, groundless: dialectical illusion is purely one-sided, and the world infinite in all its dimensions. See *MRC*D, 480–485; *WWR* I, 492–501; and *VgP*, 492–496.

<sup>21</sup> 'Just as though Kant had never existed, the principle of sufficient reason is for Fichte just what it was for all the scholastics, namely an *aeternae veritas*' (*WWR* I, 33). That Fichte alerted Schopenhauer to the importance of PSR is suggested by his annotated lecture notes. In a lecture

causality and (ii) the regulative function of reason,<sup>22</sup> the German Idealists reinstate the principle through their demand for absolute systematic completeness, and embark on the (in Schopenhauer's eyes, futile) business of formulating new conceptions of what may count as a *Grund*, their speculative innovations involving transcendent use of Kant's categories.<sup>23</sup>

The German Idealist reinflation and redeployment of PSR, as well as evincing the epistemic hubris that Kant sought to curb, has a substantive implication which makes it especially objectionable to Schopenhauer. PSR is connected closely in early modern rationalism with the ontological argument, which Schopenhauer sees the German Idealist systems as attempting to revive: Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is 'Onto-theology',<sup>24</sup> and Schelling 'venerates the ontological

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transcript from 1811 Schopenhauer records Fichte's identification of *Wissenschaft* with 'the region of reasons or grounds', which is 'supernatural or spiritual', and of the *Wissenschaftslehre* with 'the reason or ground of all knowing' (*MRC*D, 22, 28). In *WWR* I, 33, Fichte is charged with construing the ego-world relation, on the basis of PSR, as a ground-consequent relation.

<sup>22</sup> See Béatrice Longuenesse, 'Kant's Deconstruction of the Principle of Sufficient Reason', in *Kant on the Human Standpoint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Again and again Schopenhauer returns to the point that German Idealism rests on a transcendent and hence illegitimate employment of a priori concepts, especially that of causality: *MRC*D, 22, 359, 372, 376, 378–379, 384–386. In an annotation to lectures from 1811–12, Schopenhauer identifies Fichte's fundamental mistake with his 'failure to understand Kant's teaching' ('possibly due to a defect in Kant's doctrine') that explanation stops with immanent causes, and describes Fichte's appeal to the *I qua* 'principle' as a concealed attempt to circumvent this restriction (*MRC*D, 64; see also 124 and 134). Note that Kant too, on Schopenhauer's account, fell victim to the illusion cast by PSR (*MRC*D, 463n.), and bears some responsibility for the German Idealist development (*MRC*D, 64, 412; *FR*, 164, 176; *VgP*, 252–253).

<sup>24</sup> *MRC*D, 111.

proof', of which Hegel's 'whole pseudo-philosophy' is really a 'monstrous amplification'.<sup>25</sup>

Schopenhauer views his situation and role in the history of philosophy as reproducing that of Kant: just as Kant pitted himself against the Leibnizian-Wolffian school, so Schopenhauer takes up arms against German Idealism, aiming to achieve a more decisive outcome by a more direct and far-reaching attack on PSR.<sup>26</sup>

## 2. Schopenhauer's axiological premise

The second ground floor assumption of German Idealism controverted by Schopenhauer, I said, is its endorsement of Kant's conception of the source of value, which represents in Schopenhauer's eyes yet another abortive attempt to optimize reality.

The pessimism that Schopenhauer famously advocates in opposition has, however, a more complex structure than his expositions of the doctrine allow readers to suppose, and this complexity is a consequence of his treatment of PSR.

Schopenhauer's argument often appears to be that the evil of the world derives from the negative hedonic balance sheet that necessarily characterizes human (and any other sentient) existence.<sup>27</sup> However, in so far as its aim is to establish something about the metaphysical quality of the world, this argument fails to convince, relying as it does on a phenomenologically strained reduction of the objects of desire and valuation to hedonic states: that the satisfaction of every desire is followed immediately by the formation a new one does not mean that things are not better for its having been satisfied; and in any case there is value, by ordinary lights, simply in being a

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<sup>25</sup> *FR*, 16; see also *FR*, 21–23.

<sup>26</sup> See *WWR* I, 418, 510–511.

<sup>27</sup> *WWR* I, §57, and Book IV, *passim*; *PP* II, Ch. 12. On this argument, see Christopher Janaway, 'Schopenhauer's Pessimism', in Christopher Janaway (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

creature that forms and acts on desires, beyond the experiences of satisfaction that doing so may or may not procure. Schopenhauer's argument from the predominance of suffering is better viewed, however, not as the main point but merely as an auxiliary element in his case for pessimism, which has the following form.

Ultimately Schopenhauer considers the evil of existence an incontestable given, belonging to the physiognomy of the world and not open to debate.<sup>28</sup> The problem for Schopenhauer is to articulate this insight within the parameters available to him. To be sure, the contraction of PSR undermines directly attempts such as Leibniz's to validate the world, and any other account (such as those of Schelling and Hegel) which rests on an appeal to final causes. It also cuts off the Kantian source of value in human freedom.<sup>29</sup> But at the same time, the confinement of PSR to the interior of the world as representation appears to remove the basis for any rationally grounded negative assessment of the world or its contents considered collectively. Schopenhauer thus seems poised to embrace the sheer *value-indifference* of reality, in the manner of Spinoza, or any contemporary naturalist for whom talk of reality's having either positive or negative intrinsic value is nonsensical, but doing this would not give him what he wants, which is, to repeat, recognition of the *positive*

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<sup>28</sup> As Nietzsche recognizes: 'The ungodliness of existence was for him something given, palpable, indisputable ... unconditional and honest atheism is simply the *presupposition* of the way he poses his problem' (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 2nd edn. [1887], trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), §357, 307). That it has axiomatic status is shown by the way in which it is invoked: see, e.g., *MRC*D, 391; and *WWR* II, 577, 581–584, 643. It is the original motor, and a condition of, philosophical reflection: see *WWR* II, 171, 579, and note 40 below.

<sup>29</sup> Directly through its implication of psychological determinism, and indirectly through its elimination of Ideas of reason, undermining all of the special devices employed by Kant to conserve human freedom in face of the causal principle.

reality of evil, as an *intrinsic, necessary* feature of the world, inseparable from it.<sup>30</sup> His task is to give sense to this idea.

Now Schopenhauer is quite clear that practical consciousness, including the whole domain of value, is orthogonal to the world as representation: it is what gives the world as representation its ponderousness, its non-illusory quality, but it has no grounds within it; practical and axiological significance shines *through* objects, weighing them down, but reflecting nothing of their mere object-being.<sup>31</sup> If the evil of the world as representation is to be demonstrated, therefore, it can only be by attention to the way in which it manifests what lies beyond it, viz., *Wille*.<sup>32</sup> The crux of Schopenhauer's case for pessimism consists accordingly in showing (1) that the world as representation derives from a reality which is intrinsically and necessarily *without purpose*, (2) that the world as representation does not merely reflect that underlying reality or reproduce it in appearance – which would suffice only for Spinoza's conclusion of value-indifference – but reveals itself to be *metaphysically defective* in relation to it. Book II contains the demonstration of (1). The sections of *WWR* important for (2) are those in which Schopenhauer explains why, once we have achieved knowledge of *Wille*, the world as representation must be perceived as *contradictory* – an incoherent mis-expression in individuated form of a pre-categorical one, which moreover reproduces this incoherence *within* itself, in the form of the conflict of individuated wills with one another and

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<sup>30</sup> In his very earliest notes, from 1808–09, Schopenhauer describes the world as 'only an image of an actual evil existing in eternity ... the (Platonic) Idea of that real, inexplicable and unconditioned evil' (*MREM*, 9).

<sup>31</sup> *WWR* I, 95 and 98–99.

<sup>32</sup> Note that the mere 'emptiness' or nullity, *Nichtigkeit*, of the world as representation in the sense of its insubstantiality and illusoriness, *Scheinbarkeit*, consequent upon the purely relational constitution of phenomena (*WWR* I, 7, 366; *VgP*, 474–477), is not sufficient for pessimism (life's dream-likeness does not of itself make life a *bad* dream or a dream that *ought not* to be dreamt).

within themselves.<sup>33</sup> The relevant discussions are those, chiefly in Book IV, of (i) natural teleology (concerning the conflictual structure of the organic realm, which exhibits the 'inner antagonism of the will'),<sup>34</sup> (ii) sexual desire (the subordination of individual will to life to that of the species),<sup>35</sup> (iii) eternal justice (which grasps individuation as a fault or 'sin', to be corrected),<sup>36</sup> (iv) egoism and ethical conduct (the error of affirming one's individuality, and its overcoming through higher knowledge),<sup>37</sup> and (v) renunciation, resignation and asceticism (rationally necessary denial of the will to live, consequent upon higher knowledge).<sup>38</sup> The general character of things in the world, Schopenhauer says, is not imperfection but rather 'distortion', reflecting the fact that each thing is 'something that ought not to be'.<sup>39</sup>

Since the main work in substantiating pessimism has been done as soon as it has been established the world ought not to be, the role of the the argument from suffering is limited. What it adds, through its reminder that human life does not merit our good opinion on account of its hedonic quality, is an uncommonsensual re-interpretation of hedonic experience *in light of* the

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<sup>33</sup> This metaphysical contradiction, note, is to be distinguished from the *actual* contradiction which constitutes denial of the will to live (*WWR* I, 288, 301). The former, which obtains between the two worlds or world-aspects, is realized and becomes explicit in the latter, which obtains between the phenomenon and itself (as its self-renunciation) or between *Wille* and the phenomenon (*WWR* I, 402–403).

<sup>34</sup> *WWR* I, 144–149, 161.

<sup>35</sup> *WWR* II, Chs. 42 and 44, esp. 538–540.

<sup>36</sup> *WWR* I, 331 and §63; *WWR* II, 580–582, 604; *PP* II, 301–302. See also the remarks on tragedy, *WWR* I, 252–255.

<sup>37</sup> *WWR* I, §61, §§64–66.

<sup>38</sup> *WWR* I, §68.

<sup>39</sup> *PP* II, 304. '[I]ndividuality is really only a special error, a false step, something that it would be better should not be' (*WWR* II, 490–491; see also *WWR* II, 579 and 604).

metaphysics of will: Schopenhauer directs us to grasp pleasure and pain not phenomenologically but as manifestations of a purposeless dynamic.<sup>40</sup> The painfulness and ubiquity of pain are therefore, in themselves, not what establishes the truth of pessimism: suffering is probative in the case for Schopenhauer's doctrine only on account of what it displays regarding the irrational character of reality; his detailed portrait of man's misery provides *a posteriori* corroboration of the metaphysical claim.<sup>41</sup>

I will consider later whether this is cogent. For the present, the point is that Schopenhauer's contraction of PSR, and his axiological vision, are interrelated and mutually supporting. If evil has positive reality, then this testifies to the limitedness of PSR, and if PSR is limited, then theodical strategies for explaining away the manifest evil of the world, and hence denying its positive reality, are blocked. Moreover, through the reduction of PSR to a mere relational structure for phenomena,

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<sup>40</sup> We are to grasp the flow of hedonic experience, its repeated cyclical relapse into some or other mode of suffering, as it were *formally* (rather in the way that we, Schopenhauer supposes, apprehend *Wille* in music). Schopenhauer reformulates the idea interestingly in the assertion (directed against Schelling) that I find myself necessarily 'not in an absolute state' but rather in 'a state from which I crave release', described as 'the motive of all genuine philosophical endeavour' (*MBCD*, 360, 361, 365).

<sup>41</sup> Just as natural science, according to Schopenhauer's argument in *On the Will in Nature*, corroborates the metaphysics of will. It is to be noted that Schopenhauer has also an axiological *argument* for his pessimistic metaphysics (mirroring Kant's claim that moral interest argues for the truth of transcendental idealism): his metaphysics are required – once the contraction of PSR has been accepted – in order to preserve the possibility of salvation in the face of our mortality (*WWR* II, 643–644). More broadly, Schopenhauer offers the inducements that – again, given the results of Kant's philosophy – no other way of endowing suffering with meaning, or of rescuing any truth in Christianity, is available (*MREM*, 10; *MBCD*, 338; *WWR* I, §70; *WWR* II, Ch. 48).

the existence of evil is explained, as supervening on individuation: in Schopenhauer's brilliant reversal of Leibniz, PSR is not what saves us from evil but the source of evil itself.

### 3. Schopenhauer's inversion of Fichte: the blindness of *Wille*

Schopenhauer's contraction of PSR, and his axiological vision, underpin his inversion of Fichte's post-Kantian reconception of the subject as a primarily and essentially volitional conative being. In order to become clear about what exactly this comprises, it is necessary to look in some detail at the position Fichte develops in his *System of Ethics*.<sup>42</sup>

Fichte begins, in Cartesian style, with the thinking of oneself. The task is to determine what this involves and how it is possible. Fichte argues that originally, at the level of the facts of ordinary consciousness, the I must find itself not as thinking, i.e. as intellect, but as *willing*,<sup>43</sup> and that to find

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<sup>42</sup> This is a clearer and much revised reworking of material in Part Three of the 1794–95

presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*: J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge*, in *The Science of Knowledge, with the First and Second Introductions*, ed. and trans.

Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 256–268.

Schopenhauer's critical comments on Fichte's *System of Ethics* are in *MRC*, 399–406. It is in this text of Fichte's that Johann Friedrich Herbart, in his highly critical review of the first volume of *WWR* ('Rezension, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* von Arthur Schopenhauer. Leipzig, bei F. M. Brockhaus. 1819', *Hermes, oder, Kritisches Jahrbuch der Literatur* 20, 1820, 131–148), claims to find already formulated Schopenhauer's thesis that will comprises the inner essence of the subject.

<sup>43</sup> For the reason that thinking requires something objective set in opposition to it, if it is to become an object, whereas willing, at the level of facts of consciousness, stands necessarily in opposition to something objective: J. G. Fichte, *The System of Ethics according to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre* [1798], ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale and Günter Zöllner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 26.

oneself more specifically as a willing *from which all that is foreign has been abstracted*, as the task at hand requires, is to find oneself as a *tendency (Tendenz)*, or faculty or power (*Vermögen*), towards self-activity. Alternatively put: I find myself as a tendency to determine myself absolutely, without any external impetus, or again, as a tendency to self-activity for self-activity's sake.<sup>44</sup>

And since, in thus finding oneself, one finds oneself *as* (identical with) that which is found, and since, equally, that which does the finding brings what it finds under the sway of *concepts*, the I in finding itself as a *Tendenz* grasps itself also as an intellect. Consciousness of self, as having both power and freedom, arises therewith: the I grasps itself as capable of giving itself determinations through concepts.<sup>45</sup> The problem which now arises, according to Fichte, is that the conception which has been provided so far remains that of a mere *power* without actuality.<sup>46</sup> Alternatively stated, the problem is that we have got only as far as an intellect that intuits itself as *pure activity*, standing in opposition to all *subsisting* and *being posited*.<sup>47</sup> The solution, Fichte argues, is for the *Tendenz* to be thought to assume a more robust form, which he calls drive, *Trieb*, defined as 'a real, inner explanatory ground of an actual self-activity – a drive, moreover, that is posited as essential, subsisting, and ineradicable'.<sup>48</sup> Fichte draws an analogy with the elasticity in a compressed steel spring as an inner ground of its activity.

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<sup>44</sup> That there *is* a 'sake' or aim – separating Fichte from Schopenhauer at the outset – is crucial.

Schelling, in his still Fichtean *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1978), p. 35, considers and rejects the possibility that the self's activity is fundamentally 'blind'.

<sup>45</sup> And only through concepts, Fichte, *System of Ethics*, p. 42.

<sup>46</sup> The I's finding itself as a *Tendenz* has not, we now see, been sufficiently accounted for; Fichte, *System of Ethics*, pp. 43–44.

<sup>47</sup> See Fichte, *System of Ethics*, p. 42.

<sup>48</sup> Fichte, *System of Ethics*, p. 44.

With this last shift, we are clearly approaching Schopenhauer's conceptual neighbourhood. What should be emphasized for present purposes, however, are the features of this notion of drive which lock it into Fichte's project. As we have seen, it is introduced by Fichte in the context of a transcendental enquiry into the possibility of self-consciousness. The problem set by self-consciousness can also be viewed, Fichte explains, in terms of the demand that we, in philosophical reflection, construct a concept, which we are to suppose available to the I itself, of the identity of subject and object. Now this demand, Fichte affirms, *cannot* be met: one cannot think of oneself *as* that identity, since thinking introduces the very distinction that the identity is to exclude. The concept remains, consequently, 'a problem or task for thinking', an 'empty place' which we designate with an X.<sup>49</sup> The drive to absolute self-activity which constitutes the being of the I is, it follows, a drive which aims at the I in its entirety, the unthinkable identity of subject and object.

Fichte's drive is, therefore, necessarily engaged with the space of reasons, inseparable from conceptuality, and constituted by a telos. It will come as no surprise to learn that it enjoys also a necessary connection with morality. The drive to self-activity, Fichte argues, manifests itself in and as a *thought*, which Fichte identifies with the categorical imperative, in the form of the principle of autonomy.<sup>50</sup> Because the I in its entirety, the X of subject-object identity, cannot be grasped, the drive to self-activity must take the form of an *approximation* to it, consisting in 'a reciprocal determination of what is subjective by what is objective and vice versa'; and to proceed with this reciprocal determination, Fichte argues, is to act under the (self-given) law of self-sufficiency, which excludes determination of the I by the Not-I.

It is a consequence of this transcendental theory that Fichte can claim to have reconstructed Kant's thesis of the equivalence of freedom and the moral law,<sup>51</sup> and also to have effected a

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<sup>49</sup> Fichte, *System of Ethics*, pp. 45–46.

<sup>50</sup> Fichte, *System of Ethics*, pp. 48–63.

<sup>51</sup> Fichte, *System of Ethics*, pp. 55–56.

unification, not furnished by Kant, of practical and theoretical reason, finally putting beyond doubt the capacity of reason to be practical.<sup>52</sup>

Thus far, drive has been understood without any reference to the subject's phenomenology, but it is a general methodological requirement of the *Wissenschaftslehre* that its model be shown to accord with the facts of ordinary consciousness. Fichte adds accordingly an account of how, and in what form, drive shows up in ordinary consciousness, namely as a *feeling of drive*, called 'longing' (*Sehnen*): an 'indeterminate sensation of a need' which is 'not determined through the concept of an object'.<sup>53</sup> The feeling of drive is therefore the final manifestation of an underlying structure which has the character of a quintessentially rational task (*Aufgabe*), postulate (*Postulat*), or 'ought' (*Sollen*).

If we now return to Schopenhauer, we can see immediately the various respects in which he, while endorsing Fichte's insight that the metaphysical core of the subject consists in drive, turns Fichte's theory on its head.<sup>54</sup> What Fichte takes as merely the most superficial manifestation of rational end-directed conation, the feeling of drive, is treated by Schopenhauer as primary, and as a sufficient basis for metaphysical extrapolation.<sup>55</sup> Schopenhauer furthermore takes volitional feeling in isolation from representational consciousness, whereas it belongs to the central thrust of Fichte's argument that will and representation are reciprocally determining.<sup>56</sup> On the basis of this isolated

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<sup>52</sup> Fichte, *System of Ethics*, p. 56, pp. 59–60.

<sup>53</sup> Fichte, *System of Ethics*, pp. 101–103. Fichte denies that willing can be identified with, or that it originally manifests itself as, feeling (pp. 46–48 and p. 85), but nonetheless presents the connection as necessary.

<sup>54</sup> See Schopenhauer's criticism of Fichte's theory of willing in *MRC D*, 406–408, 413–414; willing, Schopenhauer counters, 'cannot be defined'.

<sup>55</sup> See *WWR I*, 109–110.

<sup>56</sup> Fichte, *System of Ethics*, pp. 81–87; in addition to the objects on which I act, my willing itself must be represented.

datum, Schopenhauer infers the essentially non-teleological and non-conceptual character of *Wille*. Given Schopenhauer's contraction of PSR, the inference is indisputably valid: there is indeed nothing in the bare *phenomenal* feeling of drive or will which invites, or could possibly warrant, the complex and abstract structure which Fichte takes it to manifest; Fichte's interpretation of the facts of consciousness can get a purchase only because he assumes, as PSR entitles him to do, that there must be a *reason* for the existence of feeling, both in general and in this instance, as a type of mental state.<sup>57</sup> Fichte's claim that 'the I itself has to be considered as the absolute ground of its drive', and that 'this drive appears as a freely designed concept of an end',<sup>58</sup> is thus inverted: Schopenhauer treats drive, impersonally conceived and directed to no end, as the ground of the I.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Thus Fichte analyzes feeling as 'sheer determination', 'a mere *determinacy* of the intellect, without any contribution on the part of the intellect's freedom', *System of Ethics*, p. 102. Compare Schopenhauer's brief definition of feeling in *WWR* I, 51. Karl Fortlage, in his 1845 review of the second volume of *WWR* (extracted in Volker Spierling (ed.), *Materialen zu Schopenhauers »Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung«* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 119–126), defends Fichte: Schopenhauer's concept of will without intelligence is, he argues, incoherent; in systematic terms, Schopenhauer represents merely an intermediation in the transition from Kant to Fichte (and Schelling).

<sup>58</sup> Fichte, *System of Ethics*, p. 103.

<sup>59</sup> Even if Schopenhauer's non-Fichtean concept of will owes something to the *Urwille* posited in Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* as primal being, *Ursein – Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Matters Connected Therewith* [1809], trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 350, p. 21 – Schelling does not invert Fichte's conception in the manner of Schopenhauer: the *Urwille* is without understanding yet not independent of it, because it is a yearning or desire *for* it, and is prescient, *ahndend*, of it; 'the understanding is really the will in will', and it joins with yearning to form God's omnipotent and freely creative will. Schopenhauer's low estimate of Schelling's essay, as a bad reworking of Jakob

Released from individuation, purposeless drive is ready to assume the role of substrate of the objectual world as such.

#### 4. Schopenhauer and the meta-Critical problem

The flat disagreement between Fichte and Schopenhauer concerning the nature of drive or will goes back to their philosophical starting points and widely divergent views of the problems that need to be solved. We see here what a large part is played in generating Schopenhauer's metaphysical conclusions by his prior refusal of the German Idealist agenda. In taking transcendental subjectivity as an unconditional basic element in his analysis of representation in Book I of *WWR*, and in asserting that it stands in a relation of bare *Korrelation* with objects,<sup>60</sup> Schopenhauer rejects implicitly the Kantian idea, which Fichte preserves, that the subject's object-consciousness must be treated as an *explanandum*. Schopenhauer's discarding of Kant's theory of synthesis is closely connected with this rejection: on Schopenhauer's account, the subject is necessary for objects *qua* their correlate, but it is not involved in constituting the unity fundamental to objecthood in the way that Kant hypothesizes, just as the subject's unity of consciousness receives for Schopenhauer no explanation of its possibility by reference to the unity of objects. Again, when in Book II Schopenhauer raises the question of how the subject of representation comes to cognize itself as an individuated content of the objective world,<sup>61</sup> the question is understood – this we can infer from the way in which it is answered – as precisely *not* involving a solution to the problem of self-

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Böhme, is in *MRC*D, 353–354, and *FR*, 22–23, and it is dismissed once again in *PP* I, 26. The substantial criticism made by Schopenhauer, reasserting once again the contraction of PSR, is that Schelling interpolates the ground-consequent relation within God (*FR*, 22). In *PP* I, 132, Schopenhauer denies Schelling's influence.

<sup>60</sup> See *WWR* I, §5.

<sup>61</sup> *WWR* I, 99 and 103.

consciousness as Kant and Fichte understand it: Schopenhauer simply lays it down that the subject of thought is able to grasp itself as one and the same in representing and willing, in other words, that the bare phenomenal having-of-feeling involved in volitional episodes suffices for a grasp of *myself* as willing.<sup>62</sup> The question with which Fichte labours, concerning the very possibility of the I's attributing efficacy to itself, is nowhere raised.<sup>63</sup>

All in all, then, a range of transcendental questions formulated and addressed in the Transcendental Deduction and elsewhere in Kant, taken by Fichte and the later German Idealists to frame the task of post-Kantian philosophy, are set aside by Schopenhauer, whose form of post-Kantian idealism is to that extent appropriately described as, in the strict sense, non-transcendental.<sup>64</sup> Whether this implies a reversion to 'dogmatism' or otherwise constitutes a

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<sup>62</sup> In response to Fichte, Schopenhauer asserts that the I 'is merely intuitively perceivable': 'an I is something found merely as a fact, something simply given' (*MBCD*, 73). Schopenhauer's refusal to accept that there is a problem concerning how the I can become an object for itself is explicit in comments on Schelling, *MBCD*, 381 and 383.

<sup>63</sup> To be fully clear, the *transcendental* question is not raised; what *is* raised is a question concerning the inter-relations of *facts of consciousness*, which Schopenhauer answers by reference to bodily awareness. The body cannot provide an answer to the transcendental question, since, even if awareness of embodiment provides an explanation of how volitional as opposed to representational consciousness is possible, as Schopenhauer asserts (*WWR* I, 100–101), the identification of oneself with one's body is presupposed and not accounted for. It is also noteworthy – as another aspect of the inversion that I have been pointing to – that Schopenhauer's assumption that the body *explains* volitional awareness reverses the order in Fichte, who *derives* the physical power of efficacy from the practical principle governing the I and the necessity of determining one's freedom: see Fichte, *System of Ethics*, pp. 71–91.

<sup>64</sup> See *MBCD*, 466–472, where Schopenhauer repudiates the task of transcendental logic, viewing it as rendered redundant by the appreciation that the understanding is a faculty of intuitive perception.

weakness is a separate matter, about which something will be said in the next section. For the present, it may simply be noted that a clear rationale for Schopenhauer's divergence from Kant and his rival post-Kantians can be located, once again, in his axiological commitments, in so far as the transcendentalist ambition of excogitating transparent foundations for knowledge and value implies a determination to discover the world to be rational through and through.

Support for this non-transcendentalist construal can be found in Schopenhauer's early notebooks, in which he works through major positions occupied in the early post-Kantian development. Included here are Schulze's skepticism, J. F. Fries' and Jacobi's *Glaubensphilosophie*, Fichte's subjective absolute idealism, Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* and *Real-Idealismus* and all of the other innovations contained in Schelling's writings up to and including the *Freiheitsschrift*. Schopenhauer had therefore a wide range of post-Kantian options at his disposal.<sup>65</sup> What is striking

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Schopenhauer's rejection of transcendental argumentation is explored in Paul Guyer, 'Schopenhauer, Kant, and the Method of Philosophy', in Christopher Janaway (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See however Rudolf Malter's transcendental reconstruction of Schopenhauer, 'Schopenhauers Transzendentalismus', *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 66, 1985, 29–51, and Günter Zöllner's comments in 'Schopenhauer and the Problem of Metaphysics: Critical Reflections on Rudolf Malter's Interpretation', *Man and World* 28, 1995, 1–10.

<sup>65</sup> The list is not complete. Reinhold is absent, and does not figure in Schopenhauer's published works, even though his own approach has similarity with Reinhold's conception of analysis the facts of consciousness. Fichte criticized this conception and to some degree, in rejecting Fichte, Schopenhauer is returning to Reinhold's plainer view of Critical method. Hegel is also missing from Schopenhauer's early notebooks. In later writings Schopenhauer focusses on the metaphysical results of Hegel's *Logic*, which he regards as a variant of Schelling's position (*PP* II, 27–28); nowhere (to the best of my knowledge) is the method of the *Phenomenology* discussed in any detail by Schopenhauer.

in the early notebooks, however, is the absence of any sustained constructive engagement with the meta-Critical issues thrown up by Kantian philosophy. Schopenhauer records his dissatisfaction with all of the positions on offer, availing himself of their mutual criticisms, but proposes no answer of his own to the question of how propositions about non-empirical matters can be known and their truth ascertained. Nor, as I indicated earlier in emphasizing Schopenhauer's non-transcendentalism, is this deficiency remedied in *WWR*. Arguably, the best construal of Schopenhauer's position on meta-Critical issues is as a kind of semi-skeptical return to naivety: Schopenhauer appears to suppose that, since none of the ambitious and innovative post-Kantian developments yield an improved account of Kant's position, the Critical method is best regarded as a practice of simply reading off metaphysical truths directly from the facts of consciousness.<sup>66</sup> The Kantian task of *proving* transcendental propositions is eliminated, and the vital Kantian question of whether what we are *necessitated to think* corresponds to *how things themselves must be*, is overtaken by the metaphysical assertion of two worlds, one constructed within representation and the other unrepresentable.

##### 5. The architecture of Schopenhauer's system

There is another respect, connected with the foregoing, in which Schopenhauer's project contrasts with that of the German Idealists. As we have seen, Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* has as one of its principal aims the exposure of a common root of Freedom and Nature, and of the practical and

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<sup>66</sup> They are '*seen and grasped a priori*'; a priori laws are simply 'given to the understanding' (*MRCD*, 335–336). The post-Kantian to whom Schopenhauer here comes closest is Fries. In comments on Aristotle Schopenhauer asserts that 'there is no knowledge of knowledge' (*MRCD*, 454). Note the extremely minimal definition of transcendental philosophy at *PP* II, 9, as starting from consciousness rather than things; the fuller account at *PP* I, 82–84, identifies it merely with the thesis of the *a priori* origin ('rooted in our brain') of the essential laws of the world.

theoretical. The German Idealists' project of unification – their aim, taking its cue from the third *Critique* (as they understood it) yet going beyond it, to comprehend Kant's dualities in a single system in such a way as to exhibit their common source as an essential unity – is not shared by Schopenhauer.<sup>67</sup> Schopenhauer does not, however, merely reaffirm the necessity of an incompletely unified, multi-component system of philosophy of the sort that Kant considers the most that human reason can achieve. His relation to the post-Kantian unificatory project is more complex.

Schopenhauer's distance from the project of unification arises in part from his avoidance of one of the key Kantian dualities: since Schopenhauer denies the existence of practical reason in the sense maintained by Kant,<sup>68</sup> the doctrine of the primacy of pure practical reason – with all of the complications that it creates concerning the respective rights and interests, and the necessary strategies of integration, of practical and theoretical reason; issues of huge importance to Fichte and the early Schelling – does not figure at all for Schopenhauer, who instead straightforwardly identifies philosophy as such with *theoretical* philosophy, in Kant's sense.<sup>69</sup>

Within this context, however, Schopenhauer reasserts Kant's practical/theoretical duality in the form of the distinction of the world as *Wille*, which gives it, as noted, all of its practical significance, and the world as representation, which exists for the necessarily disinterested subject

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<sup>67</sup> The 'main tendency of the Kantian philosophy' is instead 'to demonstrate the complete *diversity of the real and the ideal*' (*PP* I, 86; see also 25).

<sup>68</sup> See *MRCD*, 337–338; *WWR* I, 522–523; *VgP*, 418–420. For a concise statement of his anti-Kantian, broadly Humean view, see *MRCD*, 351.

<sup>69</sup> *WWR* I, 271, 285. Schopenhauer conserves Kant's idea of the special connection of ethical conduct with metaphysical truth (e.g. *WWR* I, 384; *WWR* II, 600), but without Kant's cognitive privileging of the 'practical point of view'. Ethical action is for Schopenhauer an enacting or acting out, a *symbolization* within the world as representation, of the reality of *Wille*, cognition of which is *theoretical*.

of knowing.<sup>70</sup> Kant's practical/theoretical distinction is conserved, therefore, through its outright identification with another core Kantian duality, that of appearances and things in themselves. This has a major implication, which refers us back to Schopenhauer's rejection of Kantian practical reason and inversion of Fichte's account of the will: if practical consciousness is analyzed in terms of *Wille*, then Ought is reducible to Is; contrary to Fichte's view of the absolute primacy of the *Sollen*, there can be nothing more to oughtness than awareness (in one mode or another) of the being of *Wille*.<sup>71</sup> By virtue of its dualist architecture, then, Schopenhauer's system stays closer to Kant than do the German Idealists, but in so far as Schopenhauer resolves all dualities into the single one of *Wille* and *Vorstellung*, Schopenhauer follows at least part of the way the unificatory vector of German Idealism.

There is a further respect in which Schopenhauer takes the side of German Idealism against Kant. Kant's reservations concerning the possibility of systematic completeness are grounded on his thesis of the inherent limitations of human reason. Schopenhauer's anti-monism, by contrast, is untethered from the idea of epistemic limitation. The distinction of *Wille* and representation is *absolute* in a sense not admissible for Kant: it represents a denial not just of the possibility of *our forging* a philosophical system with the strong unity sought by the German Idealists, but of the *metaphysical possibility* that *Wille* and the world as representation form a real unity. So, whereas Kant leaves it open, and necessarily thinkable, that the dualities within human reason are united at some point which transcends our cognitive powers – indeed the third *Critique* teaches that beauty and natural teleology at least *point to* (if no more) a unitary ground of the sensible and supersensible – Schopenhauer's position is that the several roads of philosophical reflection which we must go

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<sup>70</sup> *WWR* II, 499.

<sup>71</sup> Schopenhauer celebrates Kant's notion of 'a point of view where the *moral law* appears not as an *ought* (*Sollen*) but as a *being* (*Sein*)' (*MRC*D, 326–327). See the criticism of the imperatival form of Kantian ethics in §4 of *BM*, 136–143. The shift of idiom, from *Sollen* to *Sein*, is pursued in Schopenhauer's account of human freedom, in terms of intelligible character: see *FW*.

down in our endeavour to solve the riddle of existence do *not* join up at any point.<sup>72</sup> Again this is a direct implication of his contraction of PSR.

The next question to be considered is whether Schopenhauer succeeds in charting a clear course between Kant and Fichte-Schelling.

## II. Schopenhauer's difficulties

### 1. *Wille* as ground of the world as representation

Schopenhauer denies that the relation of the will or thing in itself to the phenomenon is a relation of causality.<sup>73</sup> This follows from Schopenhauer's contraction of PSR. But Schopenhauer does not allow the realm of the thinkable to coincide with the boundaries of the world as representation, nor does he confine explanation to relations between worldly objects, for the world itself 'is to be explained solely from the will whose objectivity it is, and not through causality'.<sup>74</sup>

The problem is straightforward. So long as some element of *explanation* is involved in referring the phenomenal world to *Wille* – and Schopenhauer speaks readily of metaphysical

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<sup>72</sup> In a comment on Schelling, Schopenhauer complains of his forcing a false unity on the human subject, 'as a bridge to unite the two worlds': the genuine, critical philosopher by contrast is 'content to have ... recognized the twofold nature of his being', which 'appears to him as two parallel lines which he does not bend or twist in order to unite' (*MBCD*, 376–377). If they meet, it is in a sphere accessible only to the mystic. True philosophy, 'instead of uniting the two heterogeneous worlds into *monstra* ... will always try to separate them more completely' (*MBCD*, 412).

<sup>73</sup> E.g. *MBCD*, 489, *WWR* I, 120, 140, 502–507.

<sup>74</sup> *MBCD*, 489; see also *WWR* I, 507.

*Erklärung*<sup>75</sup> – some employment of the categories of ground and consequent, as Kant would put it, must be present. The explanation may be non-causal, but it must nonetheless incorporate a 'because' relation. Without it, we are simply left with (at most) sub-propositional, non-conceptual awareness of the world as awash with a certain all-pervasive mental quality, the quality possessed by acts of will; and although this might provide the cue for some such metaphorical thought as that the world 'insists itself' or 'exerts pressure', obviously it will not provide Schopenhauer with a sufficient basis for any of the determinate discursive conclusions that he wants to extract from his grounding of phenomena on *Wille*.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> E.g. *PP* II, 91; contrary to his own explicit claim, in *WWR* I, 80, that *Erklärung* is the establishment of 'the relation of the phenomena of the world to one another according to the principle of sufficient reason'.

<sup>76</sup> I do not know of any passage where Schopenhauer addresses this issue, and it may be asked why he does not do so. At one place Schopenhauer appears to address the similar though even more basic problem of how it is possible for us to think (form a concept of) will at all, given its heterogeneity with representation and non-conformity to PSR: '[T]he concept of *will* is of all possible concepts the only one that has its origin *not* in the phenomenon, *not* in the mere representation of perception, but which comes from within, and proceeds from the most immediate consciousness of everyone' (*WWR* I, 112). If Schopenhauer can be allowed this on the basis of his concept empiricism, then we can conceptualize features of or phenomena in the world not tied to PSR. But what still cannot be accounted for is the *relation* between *Wille* and *Vorstellung* required by his metaphysical 'because' claim: there can be no 'immediate experience' of because-ness (or, if there can, then we have intellectual intuition after all). My conjecture is that Schopenhauer supposes implicitly that the 'because' relation, or all that he needs it to amount to, is given immediately in the experience of bodily willing. The relation of (i) my (subjective experience of my) willing my arm to rise, and (ii) the objective event (in the world as representation) of my arm's rising, is declared to be a relation not of causation but identity (*WWR* I, §18). Schopenhauer may suppose that this intuition

Viewed from another angle, the problem lies in Schopenhauer's taking it for granted that the objectual world as such can pose a 'riddle' at all. In order to even form the thought of the world as constituting an *explanandum* which demands a *metaphysical explanans* – i.e., as not simply explicable, and adequately explained, in so far as its contents are interrelated in accordance with PSR – it is necessary to suspend Schopenhauer's contraction of PSR.<sup>77</sup>

The problem shows itself also in Schopenhauer's axiology. Schopenhauer's pessimism rests, I suggested, on the perception of a metaphysical dissonance, for which it is essential that the world of representation be ontologically subordinated to, and measured in terms set by, the world as *Wille*; this is what allows Schopenhauer to strike down, as normative illusions, the ends that human beings set themselves. But it may be wondered if this strategy succeeds. The *mere* judgement that one layer of reality is dependent on another may be necessary, but is it sufficient, for the negative assessment of the world as representation, its condemnation as ontologically defective? There is no obvious

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of the will/body nexus – our immediate grasp of it as identity-like yet asymmetric, with body depending on will and not *vice versa* – provides what is needed for his metaphysical extrapolation. This construal of his thinking gets support from his emphatic claim that we discover in self-consciousness a meeting point of subject and object, and of phenomenon and *Wille* (*WWR* I, 102; *WWR* II, 497). But again – even granting this 'miracle *par excellence*' – this does not solve the problem of how we come to *think* this intuited ontological fact in the way Schopenhauer requires, namely as a *quasi-causal* quasi-identity. For this reason, Schopenhauer can get no mileage out of pressing a distinction between 'the subject of knowing' and the 'subject of representation': even if non-representational cognition is possible, its content must still be *thought*; else it is mystical (and Schopenhauer denies that his metaphysics are 'illuminist': *PP* II, 10).

<sup>77</sup> At *WWR* II, 640, Schopenhauer comes close to conceding that the *further* metaphysical questions which, he allows, his system does *not* answer, 'cannot be thought by means of the forms and functions of the intellect'. The question is why this is not true also of the metaphysical questions which, he maintains, his system *does* answer.

logical principle compelling us to take the stronger view, and there are grounds for thinking that in arriving at this verdict Schopenhauer relies on elements he is not entitled to. At key junctures Schopenhauer appeals to what he calls our 'better consciousness',<sup>78</sup> but in so far as its superiority is merely asserted, it is open to the Kantian, or German Idealist, to object that Schopenhauer faces a hard choice: either the superiority of the standpoint that he recommends, from which we condemn the world as a cosmic mistake, is merely stipulated (or, as the Nietzschean may suggest, a matter of motivated taste); or it has normative foundations, in which case Schopenhauer has betrayed his own contraction of PSR to the world as representation, and his 'better consciousness' is playing the role of affording a higher level of reflection which *Vernunft* plays in Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. To put the point another way: the problem is that we are required to understand the 'expression' of *Wille* in the world of representation in a *normative* sense, since we are to judge that the latter is a *mis-expression* of the former; but a normative understanding of the concept is inadmissible given the contraction of PSR.

## 2. Schopenhauer's two models

The foregoing points to a tension in Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Two ideas essential to Schopenhauer's position are, first, that there is no properly intelligible relation between *Wille* and the world as representation, and second, that the latter must be regarded as a higher species of illusion, as the 'veil of Maya'.<sup>79</sup> What this naturally suggests is that the expression of *Wille* in the world as representation consists in its objectification, *Objektivierung*, in the sense of the *subject's* making an *object of cognition*, a *Vorstellung*, out of *Wille*. Though cognitively nothing is achieved

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<sup>78</sup> *MREM*, 23, 46, 72; *MBCD*, 19, 373, 374, 376, 416, 430, 431. It is exhibited in virtuous conduct, and associated with genius. Plausibly Schopenhauer's notion of better consciousness owes something to Fries' conception of *Ahnung*.

<sup>79</sup> *WWR* I, 8, 17, 523.

thereby, since the PSR-defined formal structure of cognition falsifies *Wille*, the character of *Wille* as purposeless striving shows up in the concrete, non-formal features of the world as representation.

Here the relation of *Wille* to representation is grasped from the angle of the *subject*. This model, which we might call epistemic or perhaps 'Eastern', tallies of course with Schopenhauer's claim to be upholding Kant's insight into the ideality of empirical objects, and arguably provides a ground for pessimism, in so far as its derealization of the world as representation strips the objects of human valuation of genuine reality. It also agrees with the conception of ethics as founded on compassion,<sup>80</sup> and it helpfully allows Schopenhauer to dismiss, as reflecting a misunderstanding of his position, the question of the nature of the overarching unity of the world(s) of *Wille* and representation.<sup>81</sup> If the sphere of *Vorstellung* is an illusion, so too is its correlate, the transcendental subject, the 'existence' of which, along with the world of objects, can be attributed to epistemic error and held to be dissolved through its correction.

This model is however by no means consistent with everything in Schopenhauer's picture. It is doubtful in the first place that it fits with the reading of expression demanded by the idea that *Wille* constitutes the inner *Kern* of the subject and other individuated entities,<sup>82</sup> a conception underlined in Schopenhauer's philosophy of natural science, which demands metaphysical grounds

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<sup>80</sup> To amplify: it allows the apparently inchoate thought entertained by the virtuous agent – viz., that I should act benevolently because *I am* the suffering other and *do not exist* as 'I' (see *BM*, 211–213) – to be validated as tracking the incoherent shape of reality as presented to a subject who has grasped that the world as representation is mere illusion.

<sup>81</sup> As it does the notion, which Schopenhauer allows to suggest itself, and which we will see is developed by Hartmann, that *Wille* gives birth to transcendental subjectivity *in order to* restore itself to tranquillity, and so is not blind after all.

<sup>82</sup> In statements such as: 'The will appears in everything, precisely as it determines itself in itself ... all finiteness, all sufferings ... belong to the expression of what the will wills, are as they are because the will so wills' (*WWR* I, 351).

for natural phenomena.<sup>83</sup> In particular, the epistemic model does not cohere with the claim that *Wille* finally achieves *cognition of itself*. Some of Schopenhauer's statements suggest that attributing self-knowledge to *Wille* just means that one of its *individuated products* has self-knowledge (or perhaps: knows itself to be an individuated product of *Wille*), but the full story of denial of the will does require that *Wille* itself, not merely its individual human objectifications, achieve genuine cognitive (and, thereby, practical) reflexivity.<sup>84</sup> The epistemic model thereupon gives way to a metaphysical (or 'Western') conception, familiar from Schelling, according to which reality undergoes a *real transformation* in so far as it *assumes a new form* in human subjectivity.<sup>85</sup> The expression of *Wille* in the world as representation now amounts to *Objektivierung* in the quite different sense of *Wille's making itself* into an object, by *giving itself determinate form*,<sup>86</sup> and its being an object of cognition, an object for a subject, becomes secondary, a supervening consequence of the self-expressive activity of *Wille*. Here the relation of *Wille* to representation is grasped from the angle of *Wille*.

This shift of conception rationalizes the doctrine of denial of will, but it creates difficulties for all of the elements that the epistemic model makes sense of. In particular it interferes with the argument for pessimism. If *Wille* in fact *becomes* the world as representation, then there is scope for

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<sup>83</sup> See *WWR* I, §27; *WWR* II, Ch. 26; *PP* II, Ch. 6; and *WN*. Also relevant is Schopenhauer's endorsement of occasionalism, *WWR* I, 138.

<sup>84</sup> This is required if *Wille* is to, as Schopenhauer says, 'freely abolish itself' by 'relating such knowledge to itself' (*WWR* I, 285, 288). It is also implied by the notion that, in the individual's denial of the will to live, the *freedom* which *Wille* alone can possess is manifest, 'immediately visible', in the phenomenon (*WWR* I, 402; see also 403 and 404).

<sup>85</sup> See Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*.

<sup>86</sup> Thus Schopenhauer talks of *Wille*, reflexively, as '*objectifying itself*' (*sich objektivierenden Willens*), 'entering the form of representation' (*in die Form der Vorstellung eingegangen ist*) and thereby 'becoming knowable' (*WWR* I, 115, 120, 506).

deeming the latter a *transcendence* of the former, a newly created, *higher* reality which sets its own terms of evaluation: if *Wille* has ceased to be blind and acquired a real teleology, then the ends projected by sentient beings cannot be cancelled as metaphysical errors.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, although the two versions of *Objektivierung* – epistemic objectification by the subject, and *Wille*'s metaphysical self-determination – are not inconsistent, and might be taken as complementary views of the same event, which is perhaps how Schopenhauer wishes to think of them, the two models have, as we have seen, contradictory implications for key theses in Schopenhauer's philosophy. That Schopenhauer may indeed have granted both models a place in his metaphysics, invoking them in different contexts without appreciating their incompatibility, is rendered likely by his assertion of a grounding relation between *Wille* and representation not governed by PSR: in so far as the relation is indeed in reality one of ground and consequent, the metaphysical model is implied; in so far as it eludes PSR, it can consist only in epistemic error.

### 3. Between Kant and German Idealism

In addition to the doubling of Eastern/epistemic and Western/metaphysical models, a separate tension can also be identified in Schopenhauer, occurring at a more fundamental, metaphilosophical level, and which is consequent upon the complex movement of his philosophy away from German Idealism and back to Kant, and then again forward from Kant to reoccupy the territory of German Idealism. I claimed earlier that Schopenhauer asserts an *absolute* distinction of will and

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<sup>87</sup> The Western model does not therefore cohere with the abolition of *Wille* itself (in addition to the world as representation), which Schopenhauer seems to say follows from denial of the will to live (*WWR* I, 410–411). This claim appears to demand both models: in order for quieting of *Wille*, as opposed to mere dissolution of illusion, to ensue from the denial, it is necessary that *Wille* be genuinely *present in* the phenomenon; but if it is so present, then *Wille* has genuinely *become* a sphere of individuated objective entities, and it is unclear how it can retract its self-transformation.

representation, entailing the impossibility of a real unity of *Wille* and the world as representation. Such a claim, not hedged by any Kantian epistemic qualification to the effect that dualism is simply the best that our cognitive powers can manage, is what Schopenhauer needs in order to counter German Idealism's monism at its own level. But such *absolute* dualism, as it may be called, sits ill with Schopenhauer's avowed commitment to immanence and the standpoint of ordinary empirical consciousness.<sup>88</sup>

It is consequently fair to describe Schopenhauer as seeking to negotiate a way between two opposed positions:<sup>89</sup> on the one hand, Kant's view that only perspectival conclusions, judgements about the nature of things relativized to our cognitive capacities and having only the status of necessities of representation, are licensed; and on the other, the non-perspectival absolutism of the German Idealists, which rejects Kant's separation of mere necessities of representation from the true necessities governing things as they really are.<sup>90</sup> Schopenhauer internalizes both approaches to metaphysics, and seeks to combine them in a novel way. The product is a conception of two worlds, which are not so much ontologically unequal in virtue of their possessing a different degree of reality according to a single measure, as ontologically *heterogeneous* in so far as each is associated with and defined by a different *conception* of what *being consists in*: in the case of *Wille*, being is conceived as intrinsically antithetical to cognition, and in that of *Vorstellung*, it is identified with it.<sup>91</sup> Though we must treat the two conceptions as bearing on the same world, their heterogeneity entails that the relation between them cannot be grasped.<sup>92</sup> This feature is present also, to some

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<sup>88</sup> *WWR* I, 272–273; *WWR* II, 640; *PP* II, 6–9.

<sup>89</sup> Reflected in his (semi-paradoxical) statement that philosophy is 'conditioned knowledge of the absolute' (*MRC*D, 358–359).

<sup>90</sup> Schopenhauer lays claim to 'absolute truth' ('in so far as such a truth is in general attainable'), *WWR* II, 472; will is 'that which is absolutely real in every being', *PP* II, 95.

<sup>91</sup> '[T]he word *being* means "*being known through the senses and the understanding*"' (*MRC*D, 421).

<sup>92</sup> *WWR* II, 497, 'the two heterogeneous sides of the world ... are absolutely incommensurable'.

degree, in Kant's account – in so far as Kant denies that the relation of appearances and things in themselves is open to theoretical cognition – but it becomes problematic in Schopenhauer in a way that it is not in Kant, in virtue of the fact that, as we have seen, Schopenhauer eliminates the basis supplied by Kant for the co-thinkability of the two worlds, namely the categories.

Schopenhauer's accommodation of mysticism fits into this picture in the following way.<sup>93</sup> In so far as Schopenhauer counters German Idealism's monism with an absolute dualism, Schopenhauer appears exposed to charges of incompleteness: a whole range of questions is, he acknowledges frankly, left unanswered.<sup>94</sup> Mysticism provides a solution: Kant's modest, epistemically qualified, perspectival conception of philosophical knowledge is re-invoked at the outer limit of Schopenhauer's system as a ground for legitimating mystical claims, allowing Schopenhauer to acknowledge his system's explanatory limitations while reaffirming its philosophical completeness.

One final observation may be made, concerning the way Schopenhauer recasts Kant's distinction of appearances and things in themselves. As noted previously, Schopenhauer's contracted PSR differs from Kant's principles of experience in *not* owing its truth to any normatively defined epistemic function (of 'making experience possible') that it performs for us. The knowledge we have of PSR is instead of a kind that, in Kant's terms, belongs (like the claims of the German Idealists) to *dogmatic* metaphysics: it specifies the entire intrinsic constitution of a type of object (albeit a very special type, which includes cognition within its constitution). Our knowledge of the sphere defined by PSR is thus not mere perspectival knowledge, in the way that for Kant knowledge of appearance counts as a mere *perspective* on something (unknown) that is not itself appearance. Furthermore, although knowledge of the world as representation is not knowledge of a substance – since it does not contain the condition of its own existence – its (unique and

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<sup>93</sup> *WWR* I, 410; *WWR* II, 610–614.

<sup>94</sup> As he acknowledges: *WWR* II, 640–641. *WWR* II, 579: 'even the most perfect philosophy will always contain an unexplained element, like an insoluble precipitate or remainder'.

sufficient) ontological requisite, viz. *Wille*, is known to us. We know, therefore, both the *essence* and the *ground* of the world as representation. Now, just as Schopenhauerian *Vorstellung* is not Kantian *Erscheinung*, so Schopenhauer's thing in itself is not Kant's, and in Kant's terms, Schopenhauer's claims to knowledge of the world as representation – viz., as constituted internally by PSR and grounded externally on *Wille* – is *already* knowledge of a thing in itself: though Schopenhauer's contraction of PSR restricts its domain, PSR enjoys with respect to that domain the same kind of absolute metaphysical validity as it enjoyed (with respect to being in general) for Spinoza and Leibniz. In this unexpected way, Schopenhauer's development of Kant's transcendental idealism, which he intended as a radical alternative to the Fichte-Schelling form of post-Kantianism, ends up, in the respect indicated, firmly on their side.<sup>95</sup>

If the difficulties I have indicated are genuine, then Schopenhauer's deconstruction of German Idealism does not succeed. To press the point home: It is a consequence of the foregoing that the very charges that Schopenhauer lays against Schelling can be levelled against his own system. Schopenhauer repudiates the intellectually intuited 'indifference point' of Schelling's identity philosophy, claiming that Schelling's positing of an absolute unity of the subjective and the

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<sup>95</sup> This result is not so surprising, when we recall Schopenhauer's alignment of Kant's idealism with that of Berkeley (*WWR* I, 434–435, 444; *WWR* II, 8), whose idealism is by Kant's lights a form of transcendental realism. The point can thus be put as follows. Schopenhauer makes clear that his understanding of *Erscheinung* takes an extra, Berkeleyan step beyond Kant's (*VgP*, 482–489), and because for Schopenhauer the subject-object relation is one of bare *Korrelation*, and the object's existence *consists in* its relatedness to the subject (as it does for Berkeley), our mode of cognition, *Erkenntnisart*, is for Schopenhauer not a (merely formal) condition to which objects are subject and hence relativized in so far as they are cognized (as it is for Kant), but an (*unrelativized*) *ontological component* of those objects (as they are *an sich*).

objective violates the principle of contradiction and results in mere pseudo-concepts.<sup>96</sup> But if Schopenhauer requires us to think the world as a superimposition of two dissociated conceptions, then he puts us in the same position as that which he criticizes in Schelling. The 'either-or, neither-nor, both-and' character of Schelling's point of indifference is reproduced in the *structure* of Schopenhauer's system, which hinges on a supposition of the very same order – namely, that *Wille* can both *be* and *not be* the world as representation. The same combination of conjunction and exclusive disjunction is involved. The difference from Schelling is only that Schopenhauer has not made the supposition formally explicit, and chooses to describe our knowledge of the coming together of *Wille* and the world as representation as mere 'negative knowledge'.<sup>97</sup> But again it does not look as if the negative character of our knowledge creates a real difference: Schopenhauer may not talk of a faculty of intellectual intuition, or develop a theory of construction in concepts, but still he must posit a capacity to grasp in *some* manner the *nexus* of *Wille* and representation, on pain of foregoing the claim that philosophical knowledge is involved here at all.<sup>98</sup>

### III. The post-Schopenhauerian development

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<sup>96</sup> E.g., *MRC*D, 342, 359–360, 371–373, 391, and *WWR* I, 26. Schopenhauer is on weak ground here, in so far as his own claim to possess the concepts of object, subject, and *Korrelation*, which *define the sphere* within which PSR operates, appears to assume intellectual intuition or its equivalent.

<sup>97</sup> *WWR* I, 410; *WWR* II, 612.

<sup>98</sup> It is highly significant in this context that Schopenhauer describes Kant's account of intellectual intuition in §76 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* – passages inspirational for the German Idealists, and which, one might think, Schopenhauer ought to have dismissed as one of Kant's regrettable errors – as 'the pith of the Kantian philosophy' (*MRC*D, 326–327).

I want now to look at the post-Schopenhauerian development, with a view to showing how it bears witness to the problem created by his contraction of PSR, and to charting Schopenhauer's influence on late nineteenth-century philosophy. Distinguished below are five systematic possibilities, mapped onto actual historical developments.<sup>99</sup> Each represents a different move that, it may be thought, Schopenhauer may or should make in response to the difficulties generated by his attempt to persevere with substantive metaphysical claims while contracting reason. In each case I will note very briefly its arguable limitation from Schopenhauer's perspective or a problem that it encounters.

### 1. Modifying German Idealism from within: late Schelling

Schelling's late philosophy is of course not a development *of* Schopenhauer's philosophy but an independent development *within* German Idealism, which was already underway, though it had not come to completion, by the time Schopenhauer came on the German philosophical scene.<sup>100</sup> It merits consideration here nonetheless, in so far as the late Schelling may be regarded as attempting to modify German Idealism in a way that incorporates the conviction at the root of Schopenhauer's project: Schelling had in clear view from 1804 onwards the very problem that appears to mark the limit of Schopenhauer's philosophical system, namely how to express and explain, in discursive terms and with reasoned justification, the failure of the real to be the rational.

In his *Essay on Human Freedom* of 1809 Schelling tries to revise the system of idealism in a way that will accommodate the possibility of evil, something which, he argues, Kant, Fichte and by implication his own earlier forms of idealism had precluded. This involves Schelling in rethinking the Absolute, or God, as primordially *will*, without conceptual form or understanding, 'blind

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<sup>99</sup> I provide only selective coverage; for a comprehensive view of Schopenhauer's influence and successors, see Fabio Ciraci, Domenico M. Fazio, and Matthias Koßler (eds.), *Schopenhauer und die Schopenhauer-Schule* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2009).

<sup>100</sup> See note 59 above.

longing'. Reason, on this account, is something that *comes to be*, in and through God's volitional self-realization. The pattern mirrors Schopenhauer: first there is will, then there is the space of reasons; and the possibility of evil derives from the 'excess' of reality over reason, the residue of non-rational will carried over into rationally formed reality.<sup>101</sup> What might be claimed therefore is that, though Schopenhauer's reassertion of the unsolved problem of evil poses a challenge which the incurably optimistic systems of Fichte and Hegel cannot meet, the challenge *is* eventually met by Schelling.

The notion that Schelling takes the wind out of Schopenhauer's sails encounters, however, the following obstacle. True to Kant, Schelling identifies evil *as such* with human *moral* evil – and this allows Schopenhauer to grant for the sake of argument that Schelling's revision to German Idealism might account for the evil that enters the world through human action, while denying that it does anything to acknowledge the evil which is written into the fabric of the world (the evil

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<sup>101</sup> The details of the later Schelling's view of reason do not belong here, but it is worth indicating the basic difference between his and Schopenhauer's respective contractions of PSR. This may be viewed in terms of their different attitudes to the thesis of the absolute identity of being and knowing maintained in Schelling's identity philosophy of 1801–02. This Schopenhauer simply *negates* by asserting its *antithesis*, i.e., that being (in itself) and knowing are *absolutely alien* to one another. Schelling by contrast thereafter continues to regard the identity thesis as containing truth, but not as ontologically primary, the important point being that, though the domain conforming to PSR is ultimately restricted, Schelling regards it as *intelligibly continuous* with its pre-rational ground. Thus in the *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling locates the birth of reason in God's self-grounding, to which it is related teleologically (*Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, p. 30). In his later philosophy of revelation, the relation between PSR and what lies outside it is formulated in terms of the (again intelligible and ultimately complementary) relation of negative to positive philosophy: see *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures* [1842–43], trans. Bruce Matthews (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), esp. pp. 127–154.

which, to take an example from a relevant context, incites Adrian Leverkühn to take back the Ninth Symphony).<sup>102</sup>

The following four neo-Schopenhauerian developments divide into two groups, according to whether they either approach Schopenhauer from the angle of German Idealism and attempt to resolve the tension in his system by working it into that context, or on the contrary propose to cut him loose from it. The pair comprising the first group can be described as 'metaphilosophically realist', in the sense that they regard Schopenhauer's metaphysical claims as aiming at plain theoretical truth (in accord with Schopenhauer's own view of their logical character) and as having immodest, non-Kantian, absolutist import. They subscribe accordingly to what I called Schopenhauer's 'Western'/metaphysical model, eschewing the illusionistic dimension of Schopenhauer's treatment of empirical reality.

## 2. Union with Hegel: Eduard von Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconscious

Eduard von Hartmann regards Schopenhauer's attempt to annex a metaphysics of will to empirical reality as essentially correct, but as suffering principally from the defect that Schopenhauer fails to explain how conceptual structure enters the picture. The teleological metaphysics of Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, published in 1869, grounds natural phenomena in a manifold of unconscious acts of will, unified ultimately under the single act of will which he calls the (All-One) Unconscious. Thus far Hartmann is following, and developing, Schopenhauer's line in *On the Will in Nature*. Hartmann departs from Schopenhauer, however, by interpreting the teleological metaphysics of nature as revealing the existence of an original synthesis of Hegel's *Idee* and

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<sup>102</sup> Whether the objection succeeds depends on whether Schelling's suggestion that man's moral evil infects creation at large can be sustained: see Michelle Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 103–104.

Schopenhauer's alogical *Wille*, the dual equiprimordial constituents of reality. Nature falls out of their union: the *Idee* furnishes natural kinds and the order of nature, while *Wille* gives these actual existence, bringing to life and imparting movement to Hegel's ghostly edifice.

The broad philosophical significance of his *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Hartmann explains, is that it comprises an overcoming of the antinomy formed by Hegel and Schopenhauer, yielding a super-system in which their respective deficiencies are corrected: the Schopenhauerian element allows Hegel to answer the familiar charge of panlogicism, while Hegel provides the ideational structure which Schopenhauer is unable to account for.<sup>103</sup>

The crucial, striking element in Hartmann's neo-Schopenhauerian metaphysics is the notion of an absolutely original, unconditioned union of *Idee* and *Wille*. This presents the following difficulty. The union is either rational or not, but if it is not, then it is impossible to understand how *Idee* can be affected by *Wille*, while if it is, then *Wille* must lie already within the space of reasons. It seems that, if the union is possible, then *Wille* must be proto-ideational and *Idee* must be proto-volitional; in which case their union amounts to the actualization of each through the other, their mutual realization in a hylomorphic relationship (suggesting, perhaps, that *Idee* and *Wille* cannot after all be absolutely primitive). This might be counted an interesting new addition to the neoplatonic canon, and it is arguably the position that Hartmann *ought* to have taken, but it is not, in fact, how he wishes to conceive matters: the *Idee-Wille* synthesis, Hartmann maintains, is indeed

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<sup>103</sup> For a selection of Hartmann's criticisms of Schopenhauer, see Eduard von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious: Speculative Results According to the Inductive Method of Physical Science* [1st edn., 1869], trans. William Chatterton Coupland (from the 9th edn, 1882) (London: Kegan Paul, 1931), Vol. I, pp. 29–31, pp. 117–119; Vol. II, pp. 101–102, pp. 339–343; and Vol. III, pp. 149–151. Hartmann reads the Hegel-Schopenhauer relation through the lens of Schelling's distinction of negative and positive philosophy, Hegel supplying the *Was* or *Wie* of things and Schopenhauer the *Daß*. To that extent, Hartmann's manoeuvres may be viewed as an exploration of the first option, i.e., as resolving Schopenhauer into late Schelling.

*unintelligible*; we must regard it as an error or wrong,<sup>104</sup> that can be characterized only in quasi-mythic terms (on the model of sexual union).<sup>105</sup> And with this it becomes clear that, contrary to the expectations raised by talk of a Hegel-Schopenhauer synthesis, Hartmann has not eased the tension present in Schopenhauer concerning the relation of *Wille* to PSR, nor has he intended to do so: rather he has singled it out, theorized it explicitly, and reaffirmed it at the apex of his system. The gain in explicitness is however offset – from Schopenhauer's point of view – by the way in which Hartmann's reconfiguration appears to remove irrationality from the world and relocate it *outside*, in its mere ontological antecedents.

### 3. Schopenhauer in the language of Hegel: Julius Bahnsen's *Realdialektik*

Whereas Hartmann aims to fortify Schopenhauer's system by melding it with Hegel's, his contemporary Julius Bahnsen recasts Schopenhauer's central ideas in the terms of Hegel's dialectic.

According to Bahnsen, there are, as Hegel says, contradictions in reality – the blame for antinomy falls on the object, not the thinking subject – but these are, as *per* Schopenhauer, functions of its character as *Wille*, not of an autonomous dynamic of the *Begriff*. The contradictions arise because will inherently *contradicts itself* – to will is to will not-to-will: every desire aims at its own extinction. The space of reasons just *is* the appearing (*Schein*) of the self-contradicting activity of *Wille*, and PSR the 'law' which governs it.<sup>106</sup> Because conceptuality is nothing over and above *Wille*'s manifestation of its self-negating essence, there is nothing within it, no potential for autonomy, that could lead to an overcoming of the world's constitutive contradictions. Whereas Hartmann marries *Wille* with reason, its ontological equal, Bahnsen's more authentically

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<sup>104</sup> Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Vol. II, p. 273, and Vol. III, pp. 124–125.

<sup>105</sup> Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Vol. II, Ch. XV, Sect. 2.

<sup>106</sup> Julius Bahnsen, *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt. Princip und Einzelbewährung der Realdialektik* (Berlin: Grieben, 1880), p. 206.

Schopenhauerian approach *reduces* reason to *Wille*; again, whereas Hartmann concedes to Hegel the genuinely rational character of reality as given to us, Bahnsen follows Schopenhauer in ascribing an irrational character to the conceptually formed world. Pessimism, the defence of which (as noted above) presents Hartmann with a difficulty, is thus firmly reinstated.<sup>107</sup>

Bahnsen's metaphysics lacks nothing in strangeness, yet may be regarded as again a consistent development from Schopenhauerian premises. Bahnsen's original contribution to neo-Schopenhauerianism lies in his substitution for the antagonism of PSR with *Wille* a primordial antagonism within *Wille* itself. This facilitates what Schopenhauer denied to be possible, viz., a grounding of PSR, thereby converting Schopenhauer's absolute dualism into an absolute monism. In a supreme reversal of Wolff, PSR is derived from a principle of self-contradiction.

Of greatest importance for present purposes, however, is Bahnsen's novel articulation of Schopenhauer's core thesis. Bahnsen takes from Hartmann a term that is absent from Schopenhauer, *antilogisch*, in order to characterize the essence of *Wille*.<sup>108</sup> He does so because he wishes to conceive *Wille* not as merely *outside* reason in the familiar and innocuous sense in which for bald naturalists nature and efficient natural causality lie outside the space of reasons, but as *contrary* or antagonistic to reason.<sup>109</sup> This notion makes sense, however, only if *Wille*'s opposition to reason is a

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<sup>107</sup> Bahnsen, *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt*, p. 210. Hartmann's case for pessimism is made in *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Vol. III, Ch. XIII.

<sup>108</sup> Hartmann denies that the will as such is *anti*-logical; it is merely *alogical*, and becomes anti-logical only in its act (*Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Vol. III, pp. 124–125).

<sup>109</sup> This is made clear in Bahnsen, *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt*, p. 6: In *Objektivdialektik* 'it is a matter not just of the conflict of the laws of *thought* with one another, but of a conflict of the laws of *reality* on the one hand with one another and on the other with the laws of thought'; the dialectical character of the relation between elements in reality (*gedachten Realen*) – not insofar as they are contained in subjective thought but insofar as they stand in objectivity – is the same as that which can obtain between thoughts, 'namely one of contradiction'. It is on this basis

relation distinct from opposition in the material sense of conflicting causality, e.g., the clash of physical forces, which is merely *alogical* or *non-logical*. The relation must instead comprise, or have a character akin to, logical opposition. The only thing that can be thought to stand *opposed to logic as such* is contradiction, the Contradictory. Bahnsen's *Antilogische* provides for this not through dialetheism, the true conjunction of contradictory assertoric propositions, but through *contradiction in will*: performative, as opposed to constative, contradiction. Bahnsen's *Wille* thus opposes reason in the mode of *refuting* or falsifying it, by dint of the fact that reality as a whole and in all of its individual forms – all possible candidates for satisfying or exemplifying reason – has in essence the nature of an impossible undertaking (a striving with the incoherent content: 'to will-not-to-will').

Bahnsen's *Realdialektik* unpacks and sharpens Schopenhauer's claim that *Wille* is 'foreign' to PSR, but makes no advance with the problem that we have been tracking in Schopenhauer. According to *Realdialektik*, the relation of *thought to reality* too must exhibit contradiction, meaning that no philosophical system which grasps reality adequately can give a full and complete account of its capacity to do so; Bahnsen's claim to knowledge of the self-contradictory essence of *Wille* is no less precarious than Schopenhauer's claim to knowledge of the grounding of the world in *Wille*.<sup>110</sup>

Hartmann and Bahnsen give a fair idea of what can be done with Schopenhauer by reworking his thought in the terms of German Idealism. The alternative is to abandon the aspiration to plain theoretical truth. This may be buttressed by the suggestion that just as, according to Schopenhauer,

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that Bahnsen differentiates his *Realdialektik* from Hegel's merely subjective, 'verbal', 'pseudo' dialectic.

<sup>110</sup> Which is not to say that Bahnsen fails to engage with epistemology: in the first part of Volume I of *Der Widerspruch im Wissen und Wesen der Welt*, 'Das antilogische Princip: Einleitung in die Realdialektik', Bahnsen tries to show that his system avoids self-refutation.

Kant allowed the Leibnizian-Wolffian philosophy which comprised his proximate target to condition and compromise his own system,<sup>111</sup> so Schopenhauer, too much under the spell of the idea of Philosophy-as-System, made the same mistake with respect to German Idealism. Two such 'metaphilosophically anti-realist' construals of Schopenhauer's philosophy suggest themselves. They are independent but not exclusive, and both are associated with Nietzsche.

#### 4. 'Aestheticist' reconstrual of Schopenhauer

If Schopenhauer's system cannot lay claim to theoretical truth, it may still be construed *expressively* or *aesthetically*, or perhaps as a case of '*showing*' what cannot be said, and in such terms a species of validity claimed for it. Whether or not such an approach counts as a poor second best, or entails a complete abandonment of cognitive ambition, will depend upon what general view is taken of the significance of aesthetic presentations and of the capacity of philosophical thought to attain theoretical truth; in the case of Wittgenstein's rendering of Schopenhauer's insights in the *Tractatus*, for example, it is not at all clear that cognitive inferiority is implied.

An anti-realist understanding of Schopenhauer underlies Nietzsche's non-committal use of his metaphysics in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where the Schopenhauerian dissolution of nature into a trans-phenomenal will is compared to a 'light-image [*Lichtbild*] that healing nature holds up to us after we have glimpsed the abyss'.<sup>112</sup> Though Schopenhauer himself barely wavers in his commitment to the unqualified truth of his system, there are moments when his concept empiricism may seem to draw him in such a direction – philosophy is described as merely depositing in concepts 'a reflected image [*reflektirtes Abbild*]' of the inner nature of the world.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *MRC*D, 310; *WWR* I, 418; *WWR* II, 582.

<sup>112</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* [1872], trans. Shaun Whiteside, ed. Michael Tanner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), §9, 47.

<sup>113</sup> *WWR* I, 384. Or, again, as an '*Abspiegelung der Welt, in abstrakten Begriffe*', *VgP*, 571.

One way of developing this line in Schopenhauer's own terms would be to claim that his philosophical system stands in the same sort of relation to man, or the human condition, as a work of art does to the Idea that it realizes. Since tragedy is for Schopenhauer the form of art that expresses most perfectly the Idea of man,<sup>114</sup> Schopenhauer's metaphysics would count as a theorization not essentially different from a tragic work but simply *more abstract*. The measure of the success of his system would consist, at least in part, in the application of criteria appropriate to a work of art – verisimilitude, resonance, hermeneutic traction, and so on. That Schopenhauer's philosophy lends itself readily to such a perspective is testified by its extraordinary track record of literary inspiration.

The essential point at any rate is that if Schopenhauer's metaphysics of *Wille* are viewed aesthetically, then they are discharged from the task of explanation: the distinction between answering and simply *evoking* the 'riddle of the world' disappears, and with it the tension created by his contraction of PSR. Also affected, however, is Schopenhauer's axiological conviction: that the world is intrinsically and positively evil must now be regarded as something other than a straightforward fact about its nature.

##### 5. 'Practicalist' reconstrual of Schopenhauer: Nietzsche

Nietzscheans may welcome the earlier conclusion that Schopenhauer fails in his endeavour to deconstruct German Idealism as showing the necessity of taking a greater initial distance from the legacy of idealism in order to overcome it. Nietzsche's own deconstruction of Schopenhauer's pessimism is well-known and needs only brief rehearsal. According to Nietzsche, what it means for the will or the practical to have primacy is not just for the intellect to be, as a factual matter, causally subordinate to the will, à la Freud. Certainly it entails that philosophical thought should reflect on its own motivation, but more deeply it means, *metaphilosophically*, that values, taken to

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<sup>114</sup> WWR I, 252.

be themselves non-metaphysical, replace metaphysical truth-claims in our understanding of the practical, and that philosophical reflection makes legitimate appeal to values in determining how to conceptualize the world. Practical orientation is understood with indifference to metaphysical questions (thus to some extent in a more Kantian way), and henceforth depth psychology replaces metaphysics in providing practical and axiological guidance. And this practical turn can be given a Schopenhauerian justification: Nietzsche's contention is that if the contraction of PSR is carried through consistently (and on his account there is further to go in dethroning reason) then practical and axiological concerns *cannot* be regarded any longer as topics in, or as subject to the authority of, metaphysics.

In this light, Nietzsche argues, Schopenhauer's own ground floor conviction that evil has positive reality must be re-examined, from which it emerges that this metaphysical judgement is a mere symptom of a defective constitution, lacking in truth and expressive of a stance towards the world which has no privileged rationality. Nietzsche thus converts Schopenhauer's categorical judgement that the world *is evil, is such that it ought not to be*, into an *act of will*, a bare imperative of world-rejection. The respective claims of optimism and pessimism, keenly debated in the late nineteenth century, form for Nietzsche an antinomy resting on a false presupposition, and its dissolution opens up new horizons.

Both the realist and the anti-realist developments can claim to stay true to the spirit of Schopenhauer's project; Hartmann and Bahnsen may be regarded as restoring it to its *terminus ad quo*, and Nietzsche as articulating its *terminus ad quem*. The latter is doubtless more congenial to us now, but its limitation – again, from Schopenhauer's point of view – is worth noting. What holds Schopenhauer within metaphysics is not a failure to grasp the possibility of saying farewell to the whole business of trying to say something about the essence of the world: the basis for that post-metaphysical option is set out clearly in *Fourfold Root*. The reason why Schopenhauer does not take it is that the evil of existence is, for him, a hard fact, a fact *so* hard that only the *thing in itself* can do

justice to its reality. From this angle, the primary task, the difficulty of which was not lost on Nietzsche, is to persuade Schopenhauer out of his conviction of the *theoretical* character of his insight; in other words, to demonstrate that the anti-realist reconstrual does not – as it will appear to Schopenhauer – amount to a loss of reality and betrayal of his insight.

## References

Abbreviations employed in reference to Schopenhauer's works:

<i>BM</i>	<i>Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals</i>
<i>FR</i>	<i>On the Fourfold Root of the Principle Sufficient Reason</i>
<i>FW</i>	<i>Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will</i>
<i>MREM</i>	<i>Manuscript Remains: Early Manuscripts (1804–1818)</i>
<i>MRCDD</i>	<i>Manuscript Remains: Critical Debates (1809–1818)</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Parerga and Paralipomena, Vols. I–II</i>
<i>VgP</i>	<i>Vorlesung über die gesammte Philosophie</i>
<i>WN</i>	<i>On the Will in Nature</i>
<i>WWR</i>	<i>The World as Will and Representation, Vols. I–II</i>

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