I

The Affirmation of the Will

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER VIEWED himself as homeless. This sense of homelessness became the leitmotif of both his life and his philosophy. After the first five years of his life in Danzig, where he was born on 22 February 1788, his family fled the then free city to avoid Prussian control. From that point on, he said, "I have never acquired a new home."[1] He lived in Hamburg on and off for fourteen years, but he had his best times when he was away from that city. When he left Hamburg, he felt as if he were escaping a prison. He lived for four years in Dresden, but he would only view this city as the birthplace of his principal work, *The World as Will and Representation*. More than a decade in Berlin did nothing to give him a sense of belonging. He would angrily exclaim that he was no Berliner. After living as a noncitizen resident in Frankfurt am Main for the last twenty-eight years of his life, and after spending fifty years attempting to understand the nature and meaning of the world, he would ultimately conclude that the world itself was not his home. If one were to take this remark seriously, then even Danzig had not been his home. He was homeless from birth. But being homeless from birth did not mean that there was no point to his life. Schopenhauer would also conclude that from birth he had a mission in life.

[1] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Gesammelte Briefe*, ed. Arthur Hübscher (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1987), p. 48. This remark is found in Schopenhauer's *curriculum vitae*, which he included in his request to lecture and do his habilitation at the University of Berlin (31 December 1819). The *curriculum vitae* was in Latin and it, as well as a German translation, is also given in *Gesammelte Briefe*, pp. 47–55, 647–56. Arthur Hübscher has observed that the *curriculum vitae* is the most important source of knowledge for the first three decades of Schopenhauer's life; see his "Arthur Schopenhauer: Ein Lebensbild," in *Arthur Schopenhauer: Sämtliche Werke*, 4th ed., 7 vols., ed. Arthur Hübscher (Mannheim: F. A. Brockhaus, 1988), Vol. 1, p. 141. The *curriculum vitae* is Schopenhauer's lengthiest autobiographical reflection.

He was almost deprived, however, of being born in Danzig. During a tour of England, Heinrich Floris Schopenhauer discovered that his wife was pregnant. Johanna, as a first-time mother, naturally and reasonably wanted to return to the house of her parents to give birth under her mother's care. Heinrich Floris insisted otherwise. He wanted his child and hoped-for son to be born in England, thereby acquiring the rights of English citizenship, which would be useful credentials for a future merchant. Johanna acquiesced to her husband's will: "[After a] difficult struggle with myself that I completely endured . . . I succeeded in conquering my inner opposition [to staying in London]."[2] Overcoming an initial resistance, and embracing the situation and warm reception "by loving friends," she came to look "towards the future calmly."[3]

Johanna's calm soon became shattered, however. The foggy days and gloomy London nights triggered her husband's anxiety, a dim expression of the depression and melancholy that would become increasingly pronounced during the remaining eighteen years of his life. The immediate object of Heinrich Floris's free-floating anxiety during her pregnancy became his wife's well-being. In an odd move, he decided they should return to Danzig, even though traveling through northern Germany in the fall and early winter would be arduous. He did, however, have his wife examined by a well-known London surgeon, John Hunter, who assured the nervous couple that the continual motion of the trip should have a salutary effect on a woman in Johanna's condition.

The Schopenhauers disembarked from Dover at the end of November and reached Danzig on New Year's Eve 1787. Johanna would later claim that it was her desire that motivated the return, but she also knew it was her husband's anxious concern for her health that prompted him to haul her back to native grounds, because she had already been prepared to give birth in England. Although Schopenhauer's father dragged his mother back to Danzig, at least Arthur was not dragged into the world through the use of forceps. So in a twofold sense, he was unlike Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's son, a figure whose wisdom Arthur would later laud by saying that "because this son had absolutely declined to come into the world, he

[2] Johanna Schopenhauer, *Jugendleben und Wanderbilder*, ed. Willi Drost (Barmstedt Holstein: Velox-Verlag, 1958), p. 214.

[3] Ibid., p. 215.

had to be dragged forcibly into life by means of forceps; but hardly was he in it, when he had hurried away from it."[4]

Danzig

Arthur's birthplace had been populated by Schopenhauers since the late seventeenth century. His great-grandfather, Johann Schopenhauer, was a successful merchant, as was his son, Arthur's paternal grandfather, Andreas (1720–94), who was also an art dealer and the owner of an impressive collection of paintings.[5] Arthur's paternal grandmother, Anna Renata (1726–1804), was the daughter of a Dutch merchant and shipowner, Hendrick Soersmans, who had come to Danzig, serving as the Dutch Minister-Resident of the region from 1754 to 1775.[6]

Schopenhauer's paternal grandparents were prolific. Anna Renata gave birth fifteen times, but several of her offspring possessed the wisdom of Lessing's son. Of the eleven children who lived past the first few days, there were six sons and five daughters. Two of these sons died young, and two more made it into middle age. Arthur's uncle and godfather, Johann Friedrich, died at the age of forty-five in 1794, and Karl Gottfried, who also became Heinrich Floris's business partner, died at the age of thirty-four in 1795. Only Heinrich Floris, who was born in 1747, and his youngest brother, Michael Andreas (1758–1813), lived into their fifties. The fate, however, of the five daughters was even worse. Only Maria Renata (1750–1807) survived into adulthood. She married a merchant, Christian Gottfried Tietz, in 1779, and they provided Arthur with his only cousin, Karl Gottfried Tietz (1781–1833).[7]

[4] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 vols., trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969) Vol. 2, p. 579/*Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 3, p. 665.]

[5] See Hübscher, "Lebensbild," *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 1, p. 32.

[6] See Patrick Bridgwater, *Arthur Schopenhauer's English Schooling* (London/New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 3.

[7] For Schopenhauer's genealogy, see Hermann Haßargen, "Die Danziger Vorfahren Arthur Schopenhauers," *Heimatblätter des Deutschen Heimatbundes* (Danzig, 1928, 4); Walther Rauschenberger, "Schopenhauers Ahnen," *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft*, Vol. 21 (1934), pp. 131–49 and "Nachträge zu Schopenhauers Ahnentafel," *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft*, Vol. 24 (1937), p. 153; Arthur Hübscher, "Drei Tanten Schopenhauers," *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, Vol. 61 (1980), pp. 127–50; and Kurt Asendorf, "Altes und Neues zur Schopenhauer-Genealogie," *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, Vol. 69 (1988), pp. 609–13.

Heinrich Floris would have the good fortune of inheriting his father's business savvy and connections. Unfortunately, what he inherited from his mother would prove disastrous. Anna Renata possessed a "pathological nature."[8] She was given to severe bouts of depression and anxiety, and she was said to have a violent disposition. Because of her mental disorders, she was placed under the care of trustees after her husband's death. Her youngest son, Michael Andreas, was considered "an imbecile" since birth, and Karl Gottfried became "half mad" prior to his death.[9] Heinrich Floris would also show increasingly odd behavior prior to his death; his depression, anxiety, and tendency toward violent verbal outbursts all seemed to have their roots in the Dutch side of the family. Arthur would recognize his own tendencies toward depression, anxiety, and melancholy as descending from his father: "Inherited from my father is the anxiety which I myself curse . . . and combat with all the force of my will."[10] Later, when he was asked whether his pessimism resulted from something he suffered in his early childhood, he responded, "Not at all; rather I was always very melancholy as a youth."[11] He would later theorize that one inherited one's will from one's father. Contrary to this theory, it seemed as though Heinrich Floris had inherited his will from his mother.

Andreas Schopenhauer educated Heinrich Floris to ensure his success as a merchant. In addition to studies in Danzig, Heinrich Floris lived for many years abroad, accumulating practical experiences of the world, sharpening his business skills, and developing important business connections with future trading partners. In Bordeaux, he clerked in the firm of Bethmann. While in France, he developed a passion for Voltaire and

[8] Hübscher, "Lebensbild," p. 32. Also see Johanna's account of madness in Heinrich Floris's family in a letter to Arthur, 22 July 1835, in Ludger Lütkeaus (ed.), *Die Schopenhauers: Der Familien Briefwechsel von Adele, Arthur, Heinrich Floris und Johanna Schopenhauer* (Zurich: Haffmans Verlag, 1991), pp. 355–6.

[9] Ibid., p. 32.

[10] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Manuscript Remains in Four Volumes*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, ed. Arthur Hübscher (Oxford/New York/Munich: Berg, 1988–90), Vol. 4, "Εἰς ἑαυτόν," #28.

[11] Arthur Hübscher (ed.), *Arthur Schopenhauer: Gespräche* (Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1971), p. 131. It is curious to note that Schopenhauer never referred to his philosophy as "pessimism" in any of the books that he prepared for publication, although, as Rudolf Malter has noted, this is the term most frequently used to describe his philosophy (along with "irrationalism"; and "voluntarism," which are also terms that he did not use to describe his philosophy), see his *Arthur Schopenhauer: Transcendentalphilosophie und Metaphysik des Willens* (Stuttgard/Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1991), p. 151. As this incident illustrates, he did not object to being called a pessimist.

for light French literature, including that of a decidedly erotic nature. Johanna alluded to this in her memoirs: "The French novels which he put in my hands taught me that, during his stay of many years in that country, he must have had many an experience that was not apt to elevate my sex in his eyes."[12] This taste for "French novels" was soon transferred to Johanna, who strove, after her husband's death, to keep Jean-Baptiste Louvert de Couvray's erotic six-volume *Amorous Adventures of the Chevalier de Faublas* [*Les amours du chevalier du Faublas*] out of Arthur's hands. She was worried that such writings would transfer her husband's views of women to her son. It is not known whether she was successful in her endeavor to keep the books out of her son's hands. Even if she was, she appeared to have been completely unsuccessful in preventing her son from sharing his father's attitudes toward her sex.

Besides living in France, Heinrich Floris also lived in England, although less is known about the length of time he lived there. He was in England in 1773, and he may have remained there until 1780.[13] During his time in London, he developed a profound appreciation of the liberties afforded British citizens, and of England's progressive constitution, as well as its institutions. He became an unabashed Anglophile who would continue throughout his life to read the London *Times*. Arthur would also come to harbor a lifelong love for England, which tended to counterbalance his deep loathing for the narrow-minded religious bigotry he would come to always associate with England. And like his father, he would grow up to read the *Times* daily. When Heinrich Floris returned to Danzig, he received on 19 November 1780, in conjunction with his brother Karl Gottfried, who was also fluent in French and English, the right to conduct business under the title Shipping Company and Commissions – Brothers Schopenhauer [*Reederei und Kommissionen – Gebrüder Schopenhauer*]. The brothers were shipping agents, but they also engaged in some banking and brokering, along with exchanging grain and raw materials from the Baltic for British manufactured goods.

Heinrich Floris was not a handsome man. Perhaps he was just the reverse. He had a square and muscular frame, a round head, a broad face, a prominent under jaw, puffy blue eyes, and a wide mouth framed with thick lips. Unfortunately, neither Arthur nor his sister Adele would

[12] Johanna Schopenhauer, *Jugendleben*, p. 147.
[13] See Bridgwater, *Arthur Schopenhauer's English Schooling*, pp. 5–6.

escape the imprint of their father's appearance. Still, despite his uninviting appearance, there must have been something about him that would cause him to stand out in a crowd – at least in a crowd in 1773 in Berlin. Friedrich II (Frederick the Great), upon his return from a trip, spotted Heinrich Floris among a group of spectators. He stopped and asked him where he lived. Heinrich Floris told him he was a merchant from Danzig. For some unknown reason, the Prussian king then asked him whether he had a spaniel. He replied in the affirmative, which must have pleased the King, because he invited Heinrich Floris to visit him at six o'clock the next morning. The King was impressed with Schopenhauer's dog, but more so with the man himself. He invited him to settle in Prussia, after informing him that Danzig's independence would have no future. And as could have been anticipated by anyone familiar with Heinrich Floris's loyalties, the staunch republican declined the Royal invitation.[14]

This incident with Friedrich II signified Heinrich Floris's attitude toward political authority, and especially toward the Prussian monarchy. This attitude was captured in the Schopenhauer family motto: "*Point de bonheur sans liberté*" [Without liberty there can be no happiness]. Heinrich Floris's independent spirit, which bordered on obstinacy, can be sensed in a cherished family story about an event that occurred during the Prussian blockade of Danzig about a decade later in 1783. Schopenhauer's grandfather Andreas was forced to billet Prussian troops in his estate. As an act of good will, General Friedrich von Raumer offered free importation of forage for Heinrich Floris's prize stud horse. Heinrich Floris politely refused Raumer's generosity, while adding, "I thank the Prussian General for his good will . . . and when my fodder is gone, I will have my horses put to death."[15]

As his business prospered, and as was customary for a man of his age and station, Heinrich Floris desired a wife. Perhaps this was only a secondary concern. What he wanted was an heir. It is not known what particularly attracted him to Johanna Henriette Trosiener. Certainly, she had youth on her side, and she came from a respectable family, even though her father's business and political loyalties clashed with those of her future husband. Her father, Christian Heinrich Trosiener (1730–97), was a less successful merchant than Heinrich Floris. He was the

[14] Hübscher, *Gespräche*, p. 224.
[15] Johanna Schopenhauer, *Jugendleben*, p. 147.

son of a shoemaker and street peddler, Christian Trosiener, who came to Danzig from the village of Altschottland. His father, Christoph Trosiener, who was Johanna's great-grandfather, was a farmer from East Prussia. Johanna's father was known as a forceful man, both intellectually and physically. He was a member of the council of St. Johanna Church and became one of the four quartermasters for the Fishing Quarters. As such, he belonged to Danzig's corporate middle class, the "Third Estate," whose business interests clashed, at times, with those of the city's patricians such as Heinrich Floris, and with the independent status of Danzig. For a short period, he was a city councilor, and approximately a month before the birth of his first grandchild, Arthur, he foolishly proposed, as a means for enhancing trade to the Baltic countries, that Danzigers should become citizens of Prussia and pledge allegiance to its king. Although there is no record of Heinrich Floris's reaction to this move of his in-law, it is reasonable to imagine that such a loyal republican would have found it fitting that Trosiener was forced to resign from the city council and, ultimately, to sell his business and move his family to the domain of Stutthof. The fortunes of the Trosieners greatly declined, and after Christian Heinrich's death, the Schopenhauers supported them.

Johanna's mother, Elisabeth (née Lehmann, 1745–1818), was the daughter of a merchant and druggist, Georg Lehmann, and Susanna Concordia Lehmann (née Neumann). Arthur's maternal grandparents were less prolific than his paternal grandparents, but they were more successful at raising their children into adulthood. Their first child and only son, Heinrich, who was baptized in 1765, died in youth. Johanna, born on 9 July 1766, was the eldest of three daughters. She was followed by Arthur's godmother, Charlotte Elisabeth (1768–1828), and Juliane Dorothea (1773–1849).[16] A stillborn daughter had also been born in 1771.

As a female in the mid-eighteenth century, Johanna's planned course in life was fixed by her gender. Ideally, she would become a wife and mother. Although her father knew French, Polish, and Russian from his business travels, her parents were not well educated. Nonetheless, they did allow Johanna to receive a broader education than most girls of her time. Certainly, she was schooled in deportment and household management, and she learned to play the piano and speak French, a language required for polite society. Around the age of three or four, she attended a nearby

[16] See Arthur Hübscher's "Drei Tanten Schopenhauers," pp. 127–50.

school for young girls that was operated by the mother and two sisters of the well-known painter and engraver Daniel Chodowiecki.[17] She was taught deportment there, as well as elementary French.[18] Later, she was also able to observe Chodowiecki in his studio. Both the art and the artist enchanted the young girl. Johanna reported in her memoirs that this experience inspired her to become a painter and woke in her young soul a deep appreciation of art. Using language that one could have thought had come from her son, she reported that from that moment and throughout her entire life, art was "my comfort and joy; through it I was released."[19]

Johanna's remarks about the significance of art describe her experiences at around the age of seven, the same age at which she was tutored at home in German, history, and geography by a candidate for a theology degree named Kuschel, who oddly had been referred to by his aspirations as "Kandidate" Kuschel. In any case, when Johanna was thirteen, the tutor made a proposal of marriage to the recently confirmed young woman, a proposition that was ignored by both Johanna and her parents. Perhaps Kuschel had become infatuated with Johanna, or maybe he was simply trying to improve his lot by marrying his employer's daughter. Kuschel, however, was also forward in a beneficial way. He subscribed to the Enlightenment ideal that ignored the differences between a proper education for a boy and what was more appropriate for a girl. Kuschel's sentiment was also apparent in Richard Jameson, a man whom Johanna credits with having the greatest influence on her early life. As she would later reflect, "Every child has a guardian angel: thanks to mine . . . for entrusting me to such a man as Jameson . . . the charge of preparing me for the checkered life that awaited me."[20]

[17] Chodowiecki's most famous book is *Sketchbook of a Trip from Berlin to Danzig* [*Skizzenbuch einer Reise vom Berlin nach Danzig*]. It includes Plate 24, "Chodowiecki Greets His Mother" [*Chodowiecki begrüßt seine Mutter*], which shows the interior of his mother's school.

[18] It was likely that Johanna learned to speak Polish, due to her Polish nurse, before she spoke German. Later, she would perfect her French, a language required by her social status, at the school of Mamsell Ackermann, the Société des Jeunes Dames; see Ulrike Bergmann's *Johanna Schopenhauer: 'Lebe und sei so glücklich als du kannst'* (Leipzig: Reclam, 2002), pp. 35, 41.

[19] Johanna Schopenhauer, *Jugendleben*, p. 33.

[20] Ibid., p. 54. Johanna frequently referred to Jameson as "Dr. Jameson" in *Jugendleben*; see, for example, p. 28. Jameson, however, left the University of Edinburg without receiving the Doctor of Divinity degree; see Bridgwater, *Schopenhauer's English Schooling*, pp. 29–94 for a well-documented account of Jameson's life.

Jameson, who hailed from Scotland, came to Danzig in 1764 at the age of forty to serve as the Anglican chaplain, ministering to the "English" community, which had been flourishing there since the last half of the sixteenth Century.[21] The English chapel stood at Heilige Geistgasse 80, between the Trosieners' home and the house of the Shipmasters Guild. Because the chapel shared a continuous terrace with the Trosiener place, Jameson and Johanna's parents became fast friends. Jameson knew Johanna from birth, and he took a lively interest in her education. It was due primarily to him that she became fluent in English, which made her uneasy at one point: "A girl and learning English! For what on earth would you use that? This question was repeated daily by friends and relatives, because this was unheard of at that time in Danzig. I began to feel ashamed at my knowledge of the English language and therefore I resolutely refused to learn Greek."[22] Under Jameson's gentle guidance, Johanna became familiar with English literature, including John Milton, Thomas Young, Shakespeare, and Pope's translation of Homer. Jameson also helped instill in the young girl a love for all things English, a trait that would provide a common interest between Johanna and her future husband.

It is not known when and how Heinrich Floris met Johanna. Although it is also not known why he wanted to marry her in particular, she did come from a respectable family and she was properly finished. She was not a bad-looking woman, but the blue-eyed, brown-haired Johanna was likely not considered a beauty either. She did possess a cheerful personality; she was vivacious, charming, and sociable, which were character traits lacking in her husband, and which would provide useful support for the proper household and societal needs of a gentleman merchant. Johanna also shared her future husband's republican ideals and his Anglophilia, and like him, she spoke French and English.

When Heinrich Floris approached Christian Trosiener for permission to propose marriage to Johanna, as was traditional and customary, the entire family was surprised. Her parents, of course, were flattered that a rich patrician wanted to marry one of their daughters. In her memoirs,

[21] Ironically, the "English" community was composed primarily of Scots, whose main emigration to Danzig took place from the mid-sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century. The Scottish community flourished throughout the eighteenth century, until the second partition of Poland and the Prussian occupation of Danzig in 1793; see Bridgwater, *Schopenhauer's English Schooling*, pp. 1–3.

[22] Johanna Schopenhauer, *Jugendleben*, p. 56.

Johanna claimed that her parents did not pressure her into marriage and it was simply up to her to decide whether to accept the marriage proposal, which she did, although she also noted that she did not feel ardent love for Heinrich Floris, and he did not expect it.[23] Arthur would later account for the lack of his mother's passion in his highly misogynistic essay, "On Women." Women, he claimed, are passionately attracted to "young, strong, and handsome men," an unconscious expression of the will of the species that ensures the healthy propagation of humankind.[24] At best, Heinrich Floris was strong. But given Johanna's family situation and the social expectations of a young woman, perhaps his strength, coupled with the promise of social status and wealth, compensated for her husband's lack of youth and attractiveness. With two younger, unmarried sisters at home, the ramifications of living in her father's home after rejecting what would be considered a good match would probably be such that one could safely conclude that Johanna really had no choice but to accept Heinrich Floris's proposal. The thirty-eight-year-old rich merchant married the eighteen-year-old woman on 16 May 1785 in the old, small church, All of God's Angels, in Danzig.

The newly married couple lived in a townhouse in Danzig during the winter. Summers were spent at the family estate, Polanki, which was near Oliva, a small village that was an enclave of summer homes owned by wealthy Danzigers. Oliva was located about four miles northwest of Danzig. Their house was replete, as Johanna described it, "with every English comfort."[25] She enjoyed the beauty and pastoral charm of the setting – the English garden, the small lake with a boat, the eight pet lambs, each of which wore a bell set to ring in a different octave. Inside she was surrounded by artwork – paintings, engravings, and casts of antique sculptures. The library contained a rich assortment of English and French literature.

During the week, Heinrich Floris remained in Danzig, leaving Johanna with her servants at Polanki. Despite the beauty of the setting and the opulence of her abode, she adopted a solitary mode of life, avoiding visits

[23] Ibid., p. 151.
[24] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974; reprint 2001), Vol. 2, p. 618/*Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 6, p. 654.
[25] Johanna Schopenhauer, *Jugendleben*, p. 159.