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978-0-521-87138-9 - Arthur Schopenhauer: Parerga and Paralipomena:
Short Philosophical Essays: Volume I
Translated and Edited by Sabine Roehr and Christopher Janaway
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ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER
Parerga and Paralipomena

The purpose of the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Schopenhauer is to offer translations of the best modern German editions of Schopenhauer's work in a uniform format for Schopenhauer scholars, together with philosophical introductions and full editorial apparatus.

With the publication of *Parerga and Paralipomena* in 1851, there finally came some measure of the fame that Schopenhauer thought was his due. Described by Schopenhauer himself as 'incomparably more popular than everything up till now', *Parerga* is a miscellany of essays addressing themes that complement his work *The World as Will and Representation*, along with more divergent, speculative pieces. It includes his Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life, reflections on fate and clairvoyance, trenchant views on the philosophers and universities of his day, and an enlightening survey of the history of philosophy. The present volume offers a new translation, a substantial introduction explaining the context of the essays, and extensive editorial notes on the different published versions of the work. This readable and scholarly edition will be an essential reference for those studying Schopenhauer, history of philosophy, and nineteenth-century German philosophy.

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Volume I

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General editor's preface

Schopenhauer is one of the great original writers of the nineteenth century, and a unique voice in the history of thought. His central concept of the will leads him to regard human beings as striving irrationally and suffering in a world that has no purpose, a condition redeemed by the elevation of aesthetic consciousness and finally overcome by the will's self-denial and a mystical vision of the self as one with the world as a whole. He is in some ways the most progressive post-Kantian, an atheist with profound ideas about the human essence and the meaning of existence which point forward to Nietzsche, Freud and existentialism. He was also the first major Western thinker to seek a synthesis with Eastern thought. Yet at the same time he undertakes an ambitious global metaphysics of a conservative, more or less pre-Kantian kind, and is driven by a Platonic vision of escape from empirical reality into a realm of higher knowledge.

Schopenhauer was born in 1788, and by 1809 had gone against his family's expectations of a career as a merchant and embarked on a university career. He completed his doctoral dissertation *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* in 1813, then spent several years in intensive preparation of what became the major work of his life, *The World as Will and Representation*, which was published at the end of 1818, with 1819 on the title page. Shortly afterwards his academic career suffered a setback when his only attempt at a lecture course ended in failure. Thereafter Schopenhauer adopted a stance of intellectual self-sufficiency and antagonism towards university philosophy, for which he was repaid by a singular lack of reaction to his writings. In 1835 he published *On Will in Nature*, an attempt to corroborate his metaphysics with findings from the sciences, and in 1841 two self-standing essays on free will and moral philosophy, entitled *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*. A large supplementary second volume to *The World as Will and Representation* appeared in 1844, accompanied by a revised version of the original which now appeared as Volume One; then in 1851 another two-volume work, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, a collection of

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essays and observations. Only in the 1850s did serious interest in Schopenhauer's philosophy begin, with a favourable review appearing in an English journal and a few European universities offering courses on his work. In this final decade before his death in 1860 he published a third edition of *The World as Will and Representation* and a second edition of *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*. After Schopenhauer's death his follower Julius Frauenstädt produced the first six-volume edition of his works in 1873, providing the basis for many subsequent German editions up to the *Sämtliche Werke* edited by Arthur Hübscher, which we use as the basis for our translations in the present edition.

Though Schopenhauer's life and the genesis of his philosophy belong to the early part of the nineteenth century, it is the latter half of the century that provides the context for his widespread reception and influence. In 1877 he was described by Wilhelm Wundt as 'the born leader of non-academic philosophy in Germany', and in that period many artists and intellectuals, prominent among them Richard Wagner, worked under the influence of his works. The single most important philosophical influence was on Nietzsche, who was in critical dialogue throughout his career with his 'great teacher Schopenhauer'. But many aspects of the period resonate with Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory, his pessimism, his championing of the *Upanishads* and Buddhism, and his theory of the self and the world as embodied striving.

Over the last three decades interest in Schopenhauer in the English-speaking world has been growing again, with a good number of monographs, translations and collections of articles appearing, where before there were very few. More general trends in the study of the history of philosophy have played a part here. There has recently been a dramatic rise in philosophical interest in the period that immediately follows Kant (including the German Idealists and Romanticism), and the greater centrality now accorded to Nietzsche's philosophy has provided further motivation for attending to Schopenhauer. Yet until now there has been no complete English edition of his works. The present six-volume series of Schopenhauer's published works aims to provide an up-to-date, reliable English translation that reflects the literary style of the original while maintaining linguistic accuracy and consistency over his philosophical vocabulary.

Almost all the English translations of Schopenhauer in use until now, published though they are by several different publishers, stem from a single translator, the remarkable E. F. J. Payne. These translations, which were done in the 1950s and 1960s, have stood the test of time quite well and performed a fine service in transmitting Schopenhauer to an English-speaking audience. Payne's single-handed achievement is all the greater given that he was not a

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philosopher or an academic, but a former military man who became a dedicated enthusiast. His translations are readable and lively and convey a distinct authorial voice. However, the case for new translations rests partly on the fact that Payne has a tendency towards circumlocution rather than directness and is often not as scrupulous as we might wish in translating philosophical vocabulary, partly on the fact that recent scholarship has probed many parts of Schopenhauer's thought with far greater precision than was known in Payne's day, and partly on the simple thought that after half a century of reading Schopenhauer almost solely through one translator, and with a wider and more demanding audience established, a change of voice is in order.

In the present edition the translators have striven to keep a tighter rein on philosophical terminology, especially that which is familiar from the study of Kant – though we should be on our guard here, for Schopenhauer's use of a Kantian word does not permit us to infer that he uses it in a sense Kant would have approved of. We have included explanatory introductions to each volume, and other aids to the reader: footnotes explaining some of Schopenhauer's original German vocabulary, a glossary of names to assist with his voluminous literary and philosophical references, a chronology of his life and a bibliography of German texts, existing English translations and selected further reading. We also give a breakdown of all passages that were added or altered by Schopenhauer in different editions of his works, especially noteworthy being the changes made to his earliest publications, *On the Fourfold Root* and the single-volume first edition of *The World as Will and Representation*. A further novel feature of this edition is our treatment of the many extracts Schopenhauer quotes in languages other than German. Our guiding policy here is, as far as possible, to translate material in any language into English. The reader will therefore not be detained by scanning through passages in other languages and having to resort to footnote translations. Nevertheless, the virtuoso manner in which Schopenhauer blends Latin, Greek, French, Italian and Spanish extracts with his own prose style is not entirely lost, since we have used footnotes to give all the original passages in full.

CHRISTOPHER JANAWAY

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Three kinds of notes occur in the translation:

- (1) Footnotes marked with asterisks (*, ** and so on) are notes original to Schopenhauer's text. In the case of *Parerga and Paralipomena*, some of these notes are from the published text of 1851; others are incorporations by later editors of the German text, using handwritten material by Schopenhauer.
- (2) Footnotes marked with small letters (a, b, c) are editorial notes. These either give information about the original wording in Schopenhauer's text (in German or other languages), or provide additional editorial information. All (and only) such *additional* information is enclosed in brackets []. All footnote material *not* in brackets consists of words from the original text.
- (3) Endnotes marked with numerals 1, 2, 3. The endnotes are collected at the end of the volume and indicate some variations between the published text of 1851 and the Hübscher text that has been used for this translation.

Schopenhauer's works are referred to by the following abbreviations. We give page references to those Cambridge editions published as of the date of the present volume. *BM* and *FW* are found in *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*. *FR*, *VC* and *WN* appear collected in one volume. The Hübscher page numbers, which appear as marginal numbers in the Cambridge translations, are supplied in all cases, and can be used to locate passages in future volumes of the Cambridge edition.

Hübscher <i>SW</i> ₁₋₇	<i>Sämtliche Werke</i> , ed. Arthur Hübscher (Mannheim: F. A. Brockhaus, 1988), vols. 1-7.
<i>BM</i>	<i>On the Basis of Morals</i> [<i>Über die Grundlage der Moral</i>].
<i>FR</i>	<i>On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason</i> [<i>Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde</i>].

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<i>FW</i>	<i>On the Freedom of the Will</i> [<i>Über die Freiheit des Willens</i>].
<i>PP</i> 1, 2	<i>Parerga and Paralipomena</i> [<i>Parerga und Paralipomena</i>], vols. 1 and 2.
<i>VC</i>	<i>On Vision and Colours</i> [<i>Über das Sehn und die Farben</i>].
<i>WN</i>	<i>On Will in Nature</i> [<i>Über den Willen in der Natur</i>].
<i>WWR</i> 1, 2	<i>The World as Will and Representation</i> [<i>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</i>], vols. 1 and 2.

Unpublished writings by Schopenhauer are referred to thus:

<i>GB</i>	<i>Gesammelte Briefe</i> , ed. Arthur Hübscher (Bonn: Bouvier, 1978).
<i>HN</i> 1–5	<i>Der handschriftlicher Nachlaß</i> , ed. Arthur Hübscher (Frankfurt am Main: Kramer, 1970), vols. 1–5.
<i>MR</i> 1–4	<i>Manuscript Remains</i> , ed. Arthur Hübscher, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford: Berg, 1988), vols. 1–4 [a translation of <i>HN</i> vols. 1–4].

Passages in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* are referred by the standard method, using A and B marginal numbers corresponding to the first and second editions of the work. Other writings by Kant are referred to by volume and page number of the monumental 'Akademie' edition (Berlin: Georg Reimer/Walter de Gruyter, 1900–), in the form Ak. 4: 397. References to works of Plato and Aristotle use the standard marginal annotations.

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Introduction

In June 1850 Schopenhauer had completed his two-volume work *Parerga and Paralipomena*, and was looking for a publisher. He sent a letter to F. A. Brockhaus, who had previously published his *The World as Will and Representation*, and explained how he viewed the new offering:

Now, after six years' work, I have completed my miscellaneous philosophical writings: the preliminary drafts of them stretch back 30 years. For in them I have set down all the thoughts that could find no place in my systematic works. Hence this one is, for the most part, also incomparably more popular than everything up till now, as you can see from the list of contents that I include. After this I do not propose to write anything more; because I want to prevent myself from bringing into the world weak children of old age who accuse their father and vilify his reputation.¹

Schopenhauer was 62 years old and would live for another decade. But in that final ten years he produced only revised versions of the works that were already behind him in 1850: *The World as Will and Representation*, *On Will in Nature* and *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*. The contents of the new, popular work were already settled, and Schopenhauer requested only a small honorarium, but Brockhaus turned the proposal down, and Schopenhauer asked his friend Julius Frauenstädt for assistance in finding another publisher. As a result of Frauenstädt's efforts *Parerga and Paralipomena* was finally published in 1851 by A. W. Hayn of Berlin. Schopenhauer specified that there was to be a print-run of only 750, and no honorarium at all.²

In describing these writings as 'miscellaneous' Schopenhauer used the word *vermischt*, which might also be rendered as 'mixed'. Indeed his Latin phrase for them in his letters is *opera mixta*.³ But his characteristic love of a learned phrase from an ancient language had led him to choose two Greek words for his title: *parerga* meaning 'subordinate works' or works 'apart

¹ Translation from *GB*, 242, letter to F. A. Brockhaus, 26 June 1850. ² See *GB*, 250.

³ E.g. *GB*, 234.

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from the main business', *paralipomena* things 'left aside' or 'passed over'. So this suggests a variety of pieces that for one reason or another did not fit into the programme of *The World as Will and Representation*, the work that defined his philosophy, or pursued different tacks that interested him but were not essential to that programme. In the draft of a Preface that was never published (see 438 below) Schopenhauer gave a more precise explanation:

It can be said on the whole that the first volume contains the Parerga, the second the Paralipomena, the greatest portion of which are to be regarded as supplements to my chief work. – . . . Thus these chapters presuppose knowledge of my philosophy, while the rest of the second volume, and the whole of the first, are comprehensible without such knowledge, although those who have become attached to my philosophy will recognize many connections to it everywhere, and indeed elucidations of it.

The essays that cover similar ground to *The World as Will and Representation* are those concerning the nature of philosophy, idealism, the history of philosophy (some of these being in Volume I despite what Schopenhauer says), ethics, aesthetics, religion, and the 'affirmation and negation of the will to life', the central theme of the massive Fourth Book of *The World as Will*. Other pieces are more divergent, speculative pieces on topics such as the apparent fatedness of our lives and the phenomena of clairvoyance and hypnotism, or what was then known as animal magnetism. Some of the writings are decidedly popular in tone, for example the aphorisms on the wisdom of life, and the essays on noise, reading, physiognomy and the notoriously offensive 'On Women'. In the latter case Schopenhauer is for the most part ranting, as he is at greater length in the well-known 'On University Philosophy', an impressive tirade against the careerism of professors making their living in the wake of Hegelianism and toeing the line of religious orthodoxy – favourite targets of Schopenhauer's wrath and well-worked themes in his writings during the 1830s and 1840s.

Parerga and Paralipomena was the first work of Schopenhauer's to gain a relatively wide audience, and with its publication in 1851 there finally came some measure of the fame that Schopenhauer thought his due. There were positive reviews in German journals, followed in April 1852 by one in English in *The Westminster Review*, and historical summaries of German philosophy started to make reference to him. The author of the English review was John Oxenford, who in 1853 wrote a much longer article on Schopenhauer, entitled 'Iconoclasm in German Philosophy' (*The Westminster Review*, April 1853).⁴

⁴ For publication details, and discussion of the reception and influence of this article, see David E. Cartwright, *Schopenhauer: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 526–9.

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This review generally pleased Schopenhauer, with its recognition of his attempt to ‘subvert the whole system of German philosophy which has been raised by university professors since the decease of Immanuel Kant’, and its fulsome description of

one of the most ingenious and readable authors in the world, skilful in the art of theory building, universal in attainments, inexhaustible in the power of illustration, terribly logical and unflinching in the pursuit of consequences, and – a most amusing qualification to everyone but the persons ‘hit’ – a formidable hitter of adversaries.

The translation of Oxenford’s article into German played an important role in spreading the news of what it called ‘this misanthropic sage of Frankfort’, and helped to set in train the increased intensity of his reception during the final years of his life. A number of books and articles on Schopenhauer appeared, as did the revised editions of *The World as Will and Representation*, *On Will in Nature* and *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*.

Oxenford found Schopenhauer ‘misanthropic’ and referred to his philosophy as ‘ultra-pessimism’ and the labels seem to have stuck ever since, although Schopenhauer was unhappy with the former epithet, and did not describe his own philosophy even as ‘pessimism’. But by the 1870s pessimism was what he was chiefly known for. In a survey of German philosophy in 1877 Wilhelm Wundt called Schopenhauer ‘the born leader of Non-Academic Philosophy in Germany’, saying that ‘the chief attraction of Schopenhauer’s philosophy [has been] simply his Pessimism’, in which ‘[he has] completely . . . fallen in with the current of his time’.⁵ The view is echoed by Rüdiger Safranski: ‘Schopenhauer would at last make his breakthrough – but not by himself and not by his own strength: the changed spirit of the time met him half-way.’⁶ Whether it was because of the aftermath of the failed revolutions of 1848, the decline in influence of the Hegelian philosophy he had railed against, or the growth of scientific materialism and the cultural recognition of what Nietzsche would later call the ‘death of God’, Schopenhauer’s work became well known and well received for the first time. The initial fame of his popular writings in *Parerga and Paralipomena* paved the way for a posthumous six-volume edition of Schopenhauer’s works, edited by Frauenstädt in 1873, and opened a period in which the systematic philosophy first developed over half a century earlier became more widely read and commented upon.

⁵ Wilhelm Wundt, ‘Philosophy in Germany’, *Mind* 2 (1877), 503–4.

⁶ Rüdiger Safranski, *Schopenhauer and the Wild Years of Philosophy*, trans. Ewald Osers (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), 330.

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[More information](#)**Outline of *The World as Will and Representation***

The writings collected in the two volumes of *Parerga* are avowedly popular, and much that they contain can be approached without a thorough knowledge of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, ethics or aesthetics. However, he is writing against the background of his own systematic thought, and in some parts makes more substantial reference to it. So some awareness of that thought, as presented in *The World as Will and Representation*, will be of assistance to the reader of the present volume.

First published in 1818, then re-issued in 1844 with many textual changes and a large amount of supplementary material placed in a new second volume, *The World as Will and Representation* was always Schopenhauer's major work, and his other publications, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, *On Will in Nature* and *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, though they contain much that is of independent interest, are intended as elaborations and confirmations of it. Schopenhauer said that it contains a 'single thought'. But the nature of that thought has been the subject of some slightly perplexed debate.⁷ If there is a single thought, it must be highly elusive or highly complex, or both. But we can perhaps make an initial approach towards what Schopenhauer means if we examine the framework of four Books into which *The World as Will and Representation* is divided. Their titles and discursive subtitles are as follows:

- (1) The world as representation, first consideration. Representation subject to the principle of sufficient reason: the object of experience and science.
- (2) The world as will, first consideration. The objectivation of the will.
- (3) The world as representation, second consideration. Representation independent of the principle of sufficient reason: the Platonic Idea: the object of art.
- (4) The world as will, second consideration. With the achievement of self-knowledge, affirmation and negation of the will to life.

What we first notice here is an oscillation between the two key terms from the book's title. At the core of the single thought, then, is this: one and the same world has two aspects, and we can learn about it by considering it as representation, then as will, then as representation in altered fashion, then as will in altered fashion. The two alterations in question introduce two more vital oppositions. With the world as representation, we can either consider it subject to the principle of sufficient reason, or independently of that principle.

⁷ For one substantial discussion see John E. Atwell, *Schopenhauer on the Character of the World: The Metaphysics of Will* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 18–31.

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With the world as will, we can consider it either descriptively for what it is, or on an evaluative dimension – with respect to its affirmation or negation. This, however, leaves us with an immense amount to explain. Let us next try to flesh out these bare bones a little, keeping in mind the four-part dynamic structure that any would-be ‘single thought’ really needs to have if it is to map on to the work as a whole.

Schopenhauer uses ‘representation’ (German *Vorstellung*) in the same way as his predecessor Kant uses it. It stands for anything that the mind is conscious of in its experience, knowledge or cognition of any form – something that is present to the mind. So we first consider the world as it presents itself to us in our minds. In ordinary human experience, and in the extension of this in the realm of scientific inquiry, we encounter objects, and these are ordered for us, necessarily, by space and time, and by relations of cause and effect. All the ways in which the world is thus ordered for us are species of the single principle ‘Nothing is without a ground for its being rather than not being’, otherwise known as the principle of sufficient reason. Every object is experienced as related to something else which grounds it. Everything in space and time has a determinate position in relation to other things in space and time, everything that happens has a determinate cause, every action relates back to a motive and to its agent’s character, every truth is grounded in some other truth or in the evidence of the senses. So starting, as we must, from the world as we find it in everyday experience and empirical investigation, we see a multiplicity of objects related in necessary ways.

Schopenhauer allies himself with *transcendental idealism*. According to this doctrine, originally developed by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), the objects that we experience as outside of us constitute a world of *appearance*, and we do not experience them *in themselves*. Empirical objects, the objects of which any subject has conscious experience, are a species of the subject’s representations and what this realm of objects can contain is necessarily limited, shaped by the form of the mind itself. So the familiar world of empirical things is a world of objects *for a subject*, which is to say a world consisting of the subject’s representations, and not a world that can be regarded as existing in itself, independently of the way it appears and must appear to an experiencing mind.

For Schopenhauer, the human mind, and indeed any conscious mind, receives data through the bodily senses and structures them using what he calls the understanding (*Verstand*) or intellect (*Intellekt*). Without this structuring we would register only a conglomeration of subjective sensations, but with it we attain a picture of material objects persisting in time, occupying space and serving as the casual origins of observed changes and of

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our sensations themselves. However, Schopenhauer's account of cognition differs quite markedly from Kant's in two principal ways. One is that the understanding or intellect cognizes the world in a manner that is not essentially conceptual. Adopting another technical term of Kant's, Schopenhauer maintains that what the understanding gives us is intuition (*Anschauung*), which essentially means perceptual awareness of particular objects in space and time. For Kant, the senses give us an array of intuitions, and the understanding provides concepts under which it actively orders the intuitions to produce an experience of a world of objects. Only creatures capable of forming concepts and making judgements could have such experience in the full sense. But for Schopenhauer animals such as a dog or a horse, who are incapable of forming concepts, are as much aware of a world of objects as any human subject: they perceive objects in space and time as we do, being simply incapable of making judgements, forming thoughts or carrying out reasoning, and hence being unable to comprehend anything more than what is immediately present in their perception.

The other, related feature that differentiates Schopenhauer from Kant is that the capacity to form and manipulate concepts discursively to frame thoughts and arguments, the capacity which for Schopenhauer is reason (*Vernunft*), though indeed unique to human beings, confers on them no special 'dignity', nor has any special connection with freedom or morality. Reason's concepts are secondary representations abstracted from the primary material given in intuition, and reason itself is merely instrumental in value: it enables us, unlike other animals, to be guided in our actions by a vast range of motives that involve thoughts about what is not present immediately in intuition. But a rationally motivated action is no more free than one motivated by fear, thirst or lust – it is just determined by a more complicated cause. The demotion of reason from any foundational role in characterizing human behaviour or explaining what has moral worth, and the consequent levelling that occurs between human beings and all other animals, are vital distinguishing features of Schopenhauer's ethics and of his philosophy as a whole.

In the Second Book of *The World as Will and Representation*, we find Schopenhauer maintaining that the idealist account of the world as representation, though true, is seriously inadequate. For by definition it does not tell us what we are in ourselves, nor what anything in the world apart from us is in itself. All this remains a 'riddle'. Schopenhauer proposes to solve that riddle by claiming that the essence, the very being in itself of all things is will (*Wille*). The world that appears to us as representation is, in itself, will. Representation gives us the world as it is empirically: diverse, plural,

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spatio-temporal, law-like and open to investigation. Will is what that same world and we ourselves are metaphysically – one and the same essence underlying all the many empirical appearances. We must make sense of the world and ourselves from within, not merely experience its manifestations in an ordered fashion from a standpoint detached from reality. This is the central message of the Second Book of *The World as Will and Representation*.

A guiding thought here is that there is one single essence that underlies all objects and all phenomena, ourselves included, one single way in which the ‘riddle’ of all existence can be deciphered. Arguing from our immediate cognition of our own actions, Schopenhauer suggests that whenever we are conscious of ourselves, we are conscious of ourselves as willing something. This unique inner consciousness is to give us the vital clue to our own essence: it is that we strive towards ends. The intrinsic core of our being is will. Schopenhauer uses this term ‘will’ very widely, including in it not only desires, but actions, emotions and affects, and non-conscious or ‘blind’ processes that can be described as end-directed. Human rationality and consciousness are extremely useful, and give us an instrumental superiority over other beings, but are really only a froth on the surface, and do not distinguish humanity from the rest of nature at the most fundamental level. Indeed, our advanced capacities for cognition can be explained, for Schopenhauer, as serving the ends of willing: our ability to perceive and investigate the world functions primarily to enable us to manipulate objects that confront us, in order to continue existing and to reproduce ourselves. If we are really to understand the world and our place within it, we must not remain at the surface of the world as representation, but must delve into this deeper and darker aspect of reality, the world as will – darker because everything that wills or strives is necessarily at the mercy of suffering, and because this suffering has neither point nor end. As long as we will, we suffer; but that we will, and ultimately what we will, is a function of our inescapable essence, not something rationally chosen, and not something we have the means to put an end to by willing. Schopenhauer then extends this idea to the whole of nature, claiming that we can make sense of the world as such by seeing its essence as a kind of blind striving manifesting itself in multiple instances within our experience. Thus the one world is both representation and will.

As *The World as Will and Representation* progresses the tone becomes more sombre. The individual’s existence is dominated by will: desires and needs are incessant, shaping all our perception and understanding of the world, ends can never finally be fulfilled, suffering is ever-present, but the will drives us on to strive and want more things that can never properly satisfy us even if we attain them. Willing goes on perpetually and without

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final purpose: it is built into us and into the whole fabric of the world. Throughout nature one being dominates and destroys another, the world-will tearing itself apart, says Schopenhauer, because it is a hungry will and there is nothing for it to feed on but itself.

At the mid-point of *The World as Will and Representation* we return to a new, and brighter, consideration of the world as representation. It can happen, according to Schopenhauer, that we confront objects in a kind of experience that is out of the ordinary. We find all the usual kinds of relation – space, time and cause and effect – suspended, and lose ourselves in contemplation, forgetful of ourselves and of the distinction between ourselves and what we perceive. This is aesthetic experience, an extreme form of disinterestedness, a passive ‘mirroring’ of the world in which we cease to grapple with the world of objects, cease striving, and find temporary release from pain. While becoming as free as we can from subjectivity, we apprehend nature in a manner that takes our cognition as close as possible to the true essence of things: we perceive timeless features than run throughout nature, which Schopenhauer calls Ideas, intending us to take this notion in a sense close to Plato’s (or to what are often called Platonic Forms nowadays). Art provides the best opportunity for this kind of experience because it gives us a view of nature mediated through the exceptionally objective mind of a genius. Art enables in us as spectators a state of calm passivity and enhanced objectivity, and the various art forms allow us to recognize diverse aspects of the will’s manifestation in the world, from, as it were, a vantage point where our individual own will is not engaged.

The transition to the Fourth Book of *The World as Will and Representation* takes us back to the world as will, considered now with respect to its ‘affirmation and negation’, or at any rate the affirmation and negation of the ‘will to life’ that Schopenhauer finds to be the essence of each individual. This final part – by far the longest and, in Schopenhauer’s words, the ‘most serious’ – is concerned with ethics, in both a narrower and broader sense. Building on the descriptive account of the will from the Second Book, Schopenhauer gives his own answers to conventional ethical questions: What are morally good and bad actions and characters? What is the nature of right and wrong? What constitutes compassion, and the virtues of justice and loving kindness? In what sense, if at all, are our actions free? But the main thrust of the Fourth Book is a broader ethical treatment of the value of human existence as such – a profound and troubling discussion that borders on religious territory while remaining resolutely atheist in its conviction.

Although we exist as empirical individuals separate from one another and so naturally regard the good as consisting in what we can attain through the

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activity of our own individual wills, this is a mistaken view. When fully understood, the life of a human individual does not and cannot contain anything of true value. Worse, the existence of everything – as a manifestation of the pointlessly self-perpetuating and self-devouring will – is something ultimately to be lamented. To exist as a manifestation of will is to strive without fulfilment, and hence to suffer. Attaining an end through willing brings us nothing of positive value – it just temporarily erases a painful lack or absence. New desires flood in almost immediately to plague us with their non-satisfaction. And if no new desires arrive we are tormented by boredom. Because will is our essence, ‘All life is suffering’ – and consequently we need ‘salvation’ or ‘redemption’ from it. Such redemption can be achieved only by the will within us ‘turning’ and ‘denying itself.’⁸ Schopenhauer has argued that the notion of a ‘highest good’ makes no sense.⁹ But, he says, if we wish to bring that expression back from retirement and apply it to anything, then it must be to the denial of the will: cessation of desires and wants that relate to the individual we find ourselves as, detachment of identification from this individual, elimination of one’s personality, one’s natural self with its in-built attachment to the ends of living and willing, and contemplation of the whole world, with all its strivings and pains, as if from nowhere within in it. Calling on mystical ideas from diverse cultural traditions, Schopenhauer argues that only such a radical transformation, occasioned by a deep and rare knowledge of the ubiquity of suffering and the illusoriness of the individual, can restore any value to our existence. The world in itself, outside of the forms of space and time that govern the world as representation for us, cannot be separated into individuals. The truly wise human being would comprehend this and would cease to be attached to the strivings of the particular individual manifestation of will he or she is. The will that is the human being’s essence would recoil from pursuing any of its goals, and the sense of individuality weaken to the point where reality could be contemplated with a serenity that is void of the usual pains of existence because the subject has become void of all striving and void of the usual sense of self.

History of philosophy in *Parerga*, Volume I

The present volume opens with two essays on the history of philosophy, the short ‘Sketch of a history of the doctrine of the ideal and the real’ and the

⁸ See *WWR* 1, §§56, 69 (Hübscher *SW* 2, 366, 472–3). ⁹ *Ibid.*, §65 (Hübscher *SW* 2, 427–8).

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more substantial ‘Fragments for the history of philosophy’. Throughout both discussions Schopenhauer assumes the philosophical position in *The World as Will and Representation* as true, and traces a course in which earlier thought leads up to it. The ‘Sketch’ concerns modern philosophy, beginning with Descartes and ending with Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, who are pointedly set apart in an Appendix. The ‘Fragments’ take a much broader view that goes back to the Presocratics and culminates in some remarks on Schopenhauer’s own philosophy.

The ‘Sketch’ is organized around the view that the central problem in philosophy is ‘the problem of the ideal and the real, i.e. the question what in our cognition is objective and what subjective, thus what is to be ascribed to any things distinct from ourselves and what to ourselves’ (7). Schopenhauer claims with some plausibility that it is only in modern philosophy, from Descartes onwards, that this problem comes to the fore. Schopenhauer’s outline of the post-Cartesian debate encompasses Malebranche, Leibniz, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant – though the latter is not discussed with the thoroughness found elsewhere in Schopenhauer’s writings.¹⁰ Descartes posed philosophy’s central question because he came to realize what Schopenhauer sees as a straightforward truth, namely the truth – expressed in Kant’s terminology, not Descartes’ – that the world is given to us only ‘as representation’. This reveals a ‘chasm’ between subjective and objective, between what is ideal and what is real. Schopenhauer interprets the thought of Malebranche, Leibniz and Spinoza, with their various notions of occasional causes, pre-established harmony, and the identity between the order of ideas and the order of things, as centring upon this issue, but as mishandling it by retaining wrong-headed concepts such as ‘God’, ‘substance’ and ‘perfection’.

It is only with the philosophy of John Locke that the problem of the real and the ideal comes properly into focus, and the route to transcendental idealism is discernible. Schopenhauer puts Berkeley in the same tradition as Malebranche, Leibniz and Spinoza, and gives him credit for being the first true proponent of idealism, meaning

the recognition that what is extended in space and fills it, thus the intuitive world in general, by all means can exist as such only in our *representation*, and that it is absurd, even contradictory, to attribute to it as such an existence outside of all representation and independent of the cognitive subject. (16)

¹⁰ See the following essay ‘Fragments for the History of Philosophy’, §13, and especially the extended Appendix to *WWR* I, and ch. 2 of *BM*.

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This single idea, for Schopenhauer, was Berkeley's achievement, in response to the realism of Locke. What then is it that Locke gets right? First, he abandons spurious 'hyperphysical hypotheses' about God and immaterial, thinking substances. He relies on 'experience and common understanding' and for him substance is simply matter. Secondly, he marks out certain qualities, which are called secondary qualities, as 'ideal' in Schopenhauer's sense, that is, belonging merely to what is present in subjective consciousness: 'This is the origin of the distinction between thing in itself and appearance, which later became so extremely important in the Kantian philosophy' (19). From his idealist perspective Schopenhauer finds this fundamental distinction of huge significance, but parts company with Locke over his realism concerning the primary qualities, extension, motion and so on. Spatial and temporal qualities are none of them on the 'real' side of the divide that Locke seems to imply: Schopenhauer takes it as established that such determinations of space and time are, as Kant taught, all a priori forms of cognition, not dwelling in things in themselves but rather on the side of the subject's representation. Schopenhauer ends this brief narrative with the suggestion that he himself has 'solved the problem around which all philosophizing has revolved since *Descartes*' (21) with his dual theory of the world as representation and as will. The ideal, the subjective, is the world as representation, and 'the will alone is left as the real'. Schopenhauer believes that there have only been half a dozen real minds at work on the issue in Europe, and seems confident that he has sorted things out for them.

Schopenhauer opens the Appendix to the 'Sketch' by saying that his readers may be surprised to find Fichte, Schelling and Hegel excluded from the preceding discussion, an attitude that could be shared by today's reader, who may be used to the classification of these figures precisely as the German Idealists. Schopenhauer is blunt: these people are not like Descartes, Spinoza, Locke and Kant, they are not even philosophers, but sophists, whose thought never goes beyond advancing their personal interest – lovers of self, not lovers of wisdom. While Schopenhauer proceeds chiefly by impugning the motives of these contemporaries, and mocking their convoluted styles of writing, there are some criticisms of their actual doctrines here. Fichte is accused of solving the problem of the real and the ideal by simply abolishing the former, Schelling of absurdly identifying abstract conceptual thought with reality, Hegel of taking this idea and running with it to the allegedly absurd lengths of positing 'self-movement of the concept' as 'a revelation of all things within and outside of nature' (29). In a handwritten addition to his text Schopenhauer descends to

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crudity, calling Hegel's writings 'psychically effective vomitive', which should be kept in a pharmacy 'since the disgust they excite is really quite specific' (30). Schelling, by contrast, receives some praise as 'the most talented of the three', but even then only as a useful eclectic and stop-gap until some real philosopher should come along.

Schopenhauer's narrative in the longer essay 'Fragments for the history of philosophy' begins at the beginning, with the Presocratic philosophers, and proceeds through sections on Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Neoplatonists, Gnostics, Scotus Erigena, Scholasticism, Bacon, then (reprising the previous essay to some extent) the post-Cartesian 'Philosophy of the Moderns', and finally Kant and himself. In his writings on the ancient philosophers Schopenhauer shows his considerable powers as a scholar, priding himself on his direct encounter with the original texts, and giving detailed and penetrating analysis of a wide range of sources. He is especially aware of vagaries of transmission of earlier thinkers through later accounts. Nonetheless he tends to assume that philosophers in different periods of history are in pursuit of timeless truths. He thinks that the fundamental propositions of Anaxagoras, Empedocles or Democritus are to be found 'in the works of the modern philosophers, for example those of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz and even Kant, . . . repeated countless times' (33). He emphasizes those doctrines which he regards as clear anticipations of what he thinks right – e.g. the Eleatics are given a Kantian-sounding distinction between *phainomena* and *nooumena*, Empedocles' ordering principles of love and hate are glossed as 'a blind drive, i.e. a will without cognition' (34), and so on. He maintains that 'There is also much in the remaining doctrines of these Presocratic philosophers that can be proven true'; and that Socrates exhibits 'quite a few similarities' with Kant (41).

The short section on Plato does not reflect Schopenhauer's debt to this great ancient thinker, which he elsewhere puts on a par with his debt to Kant. In fact, the section focuses less on Plato as such, and more on the notion of a pure rational soul. Schopenhauer uses the term 'dianoiology' for this theoretical view, which for him is as pernicious as it is persistent in the history of philosophy. For Schopenhauer there is no soul separate from the body, and besides, it is intuition, the grasp of an objective world through the senses, that is fundamental to human cognition, not rational, discursive thought. More than half the section entitled 'Plato' returns to the modern arena, arguing that Kant's view of cognition puts paid to the Cartesian version of dianoiology. Schopenhauer's attitude to Aristotle is strikingly different to his attitude to Plato. Throughout his writings he quotes short extracts from Aristotle's works to substantiate a point in his argument, and

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he recognizes Aristotle as ‘a great, even stupendous mind’ (48), but he shows only limited respect, finding him superficial rather than profound – ‘his view of the world is shallow even if ingeniously elaborated’ (45) – and laments how he ‘cannot stick to anything but jumps from what he plans to tackle to something else that occurs to him just now, in the way that a child drops a toy in order to seize another one that it has just noticed’ (46). Aristotle’s empirical approach is valuable, though he does not always practise it consistently, according to Schopenhauer, and it is only from Bacon onwards that true empiricism emerges.

Schopenhauer’s disquisitions on writers of later antiquity show wide scholarly reading but often strike a critical, even churlish note. Stobaeus’ exposition of the Stoics is ‘incredibly dreary’ (51), Iamblichus is ‘full of crass superstition and crude demonology ... he is a bad and unpleasant writer: narrow, eccentric, grossly superstitious, muddled, and vague’ (53–4), Proclus is an ‘insipid chatterer’. Style of writing is of enormous importance to Schopenhauer, as a transparent reflection of the clarity of thought and the character of the writer. We have seen how critical he is of Hegel for his obscure and pompous writing. In this respect he is scarcely less harsh on his great hero, Kant.¹¹ So it is not surprising that virtually no one in the history of philosophy escapes this kind of complaint, though he finds Plotinus, despite his ‘boring verbosity and confusion’ (55) an important and insightful thinker. Schopenhauer attempts no comprehensive account of these earlier figures, but rather picks out certain themes of particular interest to him: the realism–nominalism debate, free will, metempsychosis, the world-soul, the ideality of time, in all of which he finds pre-echoes of themes from his own philosophy. He is also keen to postulate Indian origins for certain ideas: he thinks Plotinus must have been influenced by Indian thought via Egyptian religion, and later claims that ‘a small drop of Indian wisdom may have reached Erigena’ on the grounds that Dionysius, his source for many of his doctrines, probably lived in Alexandria (61).

The later portions of the essay contain more cohesive argument, and indeed more than half of the history is devoted to developments from Kant’s critical philosophy of the 1780s up to the 1850s, with some careful, critical exposition of Kant contrasted with more elaborate deprecation of the German Idealists: ‘foolish pseudo-demonstrations, whose absurdity was hidden under the mask of obscurity’, ‘the pap ... of absolute identity’, ‘a platitudinous, dull, loathsome-repulsive, ignorant charlatan’, and the like.

¹¹ See ‘Critique of the Kantian Philosophy’, Appendix to *WWR* 1.

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The culmination of this essay is once again Schopenhauer's own philosophy. The expositions of Kant are philosophically the most sophisticated passages in this volume. Schopenhauer clearly explains Kant's distinction between the *transcendent* (what purports to be knowledge beyond all experience) and the *transcendental* (knowledge of the a priori formal features of experience). He also gives his major objection to Kant's theoretical philosophy, directed at Kant's assumption of things in themselves lying beyond experience, which had already been criticized by one of Schopenhauer's early teachers, G. E. Schulze. The allegation is that without falling into fatal inconsistency Kant could not account for the thing in itself. Having limited cognition to what falls within possible experience, he could not, or should not, use the principles that apply within experience to try to account for the relation between experience and something wholly outside it:

However, this transition from the effect to the cause is the only way to arrive at what is external and objectively existing from what is internal and subjectively given. But after Kant had attributed the law of causality to the cognitive form of the subject, this path was no longer open to him. Moreover, he himself warned often enough against making transcendent use of the category of causality, that is, use that goes beyond experience and its possibility. (86–7)

Schopenhauer's view is that this was rightly seen as a difficulty for Kant's exposition of his position, but wrongly taken by Kant's immediate idealist successors to discredit the thing in itself altogether, starting Fichte on the path which he so deplors. Kant is inconsistent over the thing in itself, according to Schopenhauer, but that merely means that we have to look for a different means of arriving at the truth about it, as he claims to do in his theory of the will as inner essence of ourselves and the world.

The other major part of Schopenhauer's discussion of Kant here concerns the 'brilliant' Transcendental Dialectic section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which Kant 'undermined speculative theology and psychology to such an extent that since then for the life of us we have not been able to resurrect them' (90). Schopenhauer does not want to resurrect pre-Kantian metaphysical speculation about a supposed God or immaterial, immortal soul, and, as we see here, he thinks it impossible to do so after Kant's demolition job. But what motivates much of his discussion in this essay and elsewhere is the refusal of much of the contemporary intellectual world (see especially the following essay on university philosophy) to see beyond religion and leave its metaphysics behind. He gives a revised account of Kant's critique of the rationalist doctrine of the soul as immaterial substance, and an exposition of the three arguments for the existence of God which Kant had shown not to

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prove any such thing. So far he is with Kant, but he is less sympathetic to the ‘sop’ or ‘anodyne’ Kant goes on to offer:

Kant provided, as a substitute for the proofs of God’s existence, his postulate of practical reason and ensuing moral theology, which, without any claim to objective validity for knowledge, or theoretical reason, was to have complete validity in respect to acting, or practical reason, whereby a faith without knowledge was grounded – so that people at least could put their hands on something. (102)

In earlier writings Schopenhauer had been contemptuous of what he saw as Kant’s conjuring trick:¹² the way in which the idea of God appears to emerge as a consequence of Kant’s ethics, when it was already smuggled in among its presuppositions along with the assumption of absolute imperatives. Here Schopenhauer is a little more conciliatory. The idea of a just God who rewards and punishes after death might serve as ‘an allegory of truth’, though not a terribly good one:

An analogous schema of the same tendency, but containing much more truth, greater plausibility, and thus more immediate value, is Brahmanism’s doctrine of retributive metempsychosis, according to which some day we must be reborn in the shape of every being injured by us in order to suffer the same injury. (102)

Schopenhauer – whom Nietzsche later called ‘the first admitted and uncompromising atheist among us Germans’¹³ – uses the remainder of this historical essay as an extended critique of theism, and of the inability of Kant’s successors to swallow the consequences of his argument that there could be no theoretical proof of God. The notion of ‘the absolute’ gained currency in German Idealism, and the academic establishment thus found a way of making God self-evident without having to reveal too much of his nature: ‘they keep him behind a hill, or rather behind a resounding edifice of words, so that we can see hardly a tip of him’ (104). Theistic belief has its origins in egoism, for Schopenhauer, in the need to posit some being whom one could expiate in order to achieve reward and salvation. Theism, he argues, not only faces the traditional problem of evil, but ‘is in conflict with morality, because it abolishes freedom and accountability’, and can offer finite beings no consolation over their individual deaths. Moreover, it is only out of Judaism, for which Schopenhauer does not disguise his contempt,

¹² See *BM*, 129–30 (Hübscher *SW* 4, 125–6).

¹³ *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josephine Nauckhoff (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 219.

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that monotheistic belief has ever developed. He reminds us that the great majority of human beings from other cultures have held no such belief.

University philosophy

‘On university philosophy’ is an extended polemic against academic philosophy in mid-nineteenth-century German universities, and can be viewed in different lights. It is, on the one hand, a powerful and poignant defence of intellectual freedom against craven, time-serving conformism, a plea for the pursuit of truth over that of livelihood and self-interest, and a devastating attack on the perversion of thought by the influence of regimes and religions. On the other hand, it is the work of a man who had once aspired to a university career and been disappointed, whose books had gone neglected by the establishment, but who was fortunate enough to have a private income that gave him the capacity to live self-sufficiently and write philosophy purely for its own sake. The resulting piece is a blend of high-minded principle and vindictiveness, and, for all that, a vivid and engaging read. The same individual targets from the previous two essays reappear, and Schopenhauer is again in full flow against Hegel for his overwhelming, and allegedly utterly destructive, influence on the German academy. But Schopenhauer goes further and turns ‘philosophy professor’ into a blanket term of abuse, arguing that to do philosophy for money is *ipso facto* to be corrupt as a thinker – dishonest, unoriginal and liable to produce self-congratulatory nonsense. Schopenhauer also assumes an elitist, aristocratic picture of intellectual life, in which there are a few rare geniuses who genuinely advance the subject, but are destined to be ignored by the benighted rabble of their contemporaries. It suits those of modest talent to deny such a hierarchy and at the same time dress up their productions in impenetrable ‘expert’ verbiage that lends them the appearance of profundity. But whatever does not conform to the jargon of the day is mistrusted and shunned.

In this protracted rant, the same recurring points are cumulatively impressed on the reader using the gamut of rhetorical devices: textual evidence, literary parallel, simile, humour, sarcasm, insult, appeal to history, and appeal to plain common sense. Schopenhauer derides his academic contemporaries as ‘comic philosophers’, and labels their trade as ‘philosophy for hire’, invoking Plato’s contrast between Socrates and the mercenary Sophists. He argues that philosophizing in order to gain a livelihood is by definition at odds with philosophy proper, which he idealizes as always a disinterested pursuit of truth for its own sake, undertaken at all times in history by a minority of superior minds against whom the mass of mediocrities conspire. He writes at

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length of the corrupting effect of university philosophy on the minds of its students. On the one hand such teaching is conceived as a utilitarian training for public life, ‘ensuring that the future junior barristers, lawyers, doctors, candidates, and teachers receive even in their innermost convictions that orientation which is adequate to the intentions that the state and its government have in regard to them’ (132). But at the same time to theorize the state as the purpose of human existence (Hegel again) had the result that ‘the barrister and the human being were . . . one and the same. It was a true apotheosis of philistinism’ (133). Apart from questioning the necessity for academic philosophy as such – ‘It is not necessary at all to keep a couple of insipid windbags at every university in order to spoil philosophy for young people for the rest of their lives’ – Schopenhauer’s one really practical proposal is to limit the teaching of philosophy to logic, which is ‘a completed science capable of strict proof’ and, so as to acquaint students at least with something great,

a history of philosophy, succinctly delivered and to be completed within one semester, reaching from Thales to Kant, so that, as a consequence of its brevity and lucidity, it allows as little leeway as possible for the Herr Professor’s own views and acts merely as a primer for the student’s own future study. (175)

The most serious theme of this essay, connecting with the discussion that closed the ‘Fragments’, is the relationship between philosophy and theology. Kant’s demolition of the proofs of the existence of God was so effective that there was no going back to them as a basis for theology. Instead the philosophers of the nineteenth century were forced to rely on a spurious ‘immediate consciousness of God’ that bypassed the need for any proof, while happily decorating their ideas with Kantian terms that ‘sound erudite’:

since their philosophy has always only the good Lord as its chief subject matter, who for that reason also appears as a familiar old acquaintance needing no introduction, they now discuss whether he is in the world or remains outside, i.e. resides in a space where there is no world. In the first case they dub him *immanent*, in the second case *transcendent*, while acting most serious and scholarly and speaking Hegelian jargon. It is the greatest fun – which reminds us older people of a copper engraving in *Falk’s* satirical almanac, which depicts *Kant*, ascending to heaven in a balloon, casting all the articles of his wardrobe, including his hat and wig, down to earth, where monkeys pick them up and adorn themselves with them. (155)

But this God of the philosophers is, in any case, a confusion. For he has to be something like the personal God of Christianity, while also being the

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pantheistic Absolute, or God as world, that is fashionable in intellectual circles. The confusion then has to be fudged with impenetrable language in order to seem to conform to orthodoxy.

Speculations on fate and spirits

There follow two essays in which Schopenhauer takes phenomena that we might now describe as ‘paranormal’, fate and spiritual apparitions, and tries to give some rational account of them. About the first account he is hesitant: ‘Although the thoughts to be imparted here yield no firm result, indeed, might be called a mere metaphysical fantasy, I have not been able to bring myself to abandon them to oblivion’ (177). At issue here is ‘The belief in special providence, or else in the supernatural guidance of events in the course of an individual’s life’ (177). Schopenhauer reiterates the claim he had defended in his *Essay of the Freedom of the Will* in 1841, that everything that happens, happens with strict necessity, and that there is no freedom of the will in respect to individual actions. He now calls that view ‘demonstrable fatalism’. But ‘transcendent fatalism’ would be a much stronger view, that the actions and experiences of each individual life are playing out some overall set purpose, that our lives have a design and integrity, and ‘bear the stamp of a moral, or inner, necessity’ (180). But what to make of such a view? The language Schopenhauer uses here is, by his standards, wavering and tentative, when he speaks of a thought that ‘can be the most absurd or the most profound’ (178), says ‘it might not be true, but it is as good as true’ (189), and begins by admitting: ‘Our meditations on this may . . . not be much more than a groping and fumbling in the dark, where we are aware of something being there, yet do not really know where or what it is’ (177).

One interesting and positive idea to be found in this essay is that we construe our lives in two ways, one in terms of objective causal necessity, the other in terms of a subjective necessity like that with which the events of a poem or drama unfold, and that the two are not incompatible ways of understanding ourselves. Schopenhauer’s speculation is that some metaphysical account of this may be possible. For him there is definitely no intelligent agency that has literally designed our lives. But he toys with the idea that his own metaphysics can supply a rationale for the purposive view of ourselves:

If we look back from here to the principal result of my entire philosophy, namely that what presents and maintains the phenomenon of the world is the *will* that also lives and strives in each individual, and remind ourselves at the

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same time of the generally acknowledged similarity between life and dream, then . . . we can quite generally imagine as possible that, just as we are all the secret impresarios of our dreams, so too by analogy the fate that governs the actual course of our lives actually springs somehow from the *will*. (193)

Even here, however, it remains vague what Schopenhauer thinks he has really shown. The upshot of the essay would appear to be that we have a natural and irresistible tendency to construct for ourselves a narrative in which everything that happens to us is a necessary part of an unfolding plan, that to think in this way need not conflict with an explanation of events as contingently caused, and that the idea of some external power that constructs a plan for us can be at least a helpful allegory for understanding the course of our lives.

The ‘Essay on spirit-seeing and related issues’ is a much weightier affair in terms of length and the extensive documentation Schopenhauer provides, though no amount of evidence is likely to endear many of today’s readers to his argument. In his earlier book, *On Will in Nature*, Schopenhauer had devoted a chapter to ‘Animal Magnetism’, the term originating from Anton Mesmer, who was famous in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for his hypnotic techniques, which he believed gave evidence of a magnetic force transmissible in and between living beings. Similar practices continued during the first half of the nineteenth century and many studies were made of a range of phenomena that went under the names of ‘clairvoyance’ (for which Schopenhauer uses the German equivalent *Hellsehen*) and ‘somnambulism’ (literally ‘sleepwalking’). Writing in 1850 Schopenhauer is confident that the evidence shows these to be genuine phenomena: ‘whoever nowadays doubts the facts of animal magnetism and the clairvoyance connected with it should not be called incredulous but ignorant’ (200). His essay recounts a large number of these facts from eyewitness testimonies and scientific collections of data, which include prophetic dreaming, lucid dreaming (or ‘truth-dreaming’), in which one perceives one’s real environment, quasi-seeing through the stomach or limbs, second sight, presentiment of the future, thought-control and mind-reading, sympathetic cures, and apparitions of the deceased.

What explanation can be given for all these apparent phenomena? Schopenhauer cannot accept any *spiritualistic* explanation: there are no such things as spirits in his universe, and in the objective world of our experience there are only material things occupying space and time. What he offers instead is an *idealistic* explanation (200). According to Schopenhauer’s interpretation of idealism, the world of material things in space and time is not the world as it is in itself, and distinctions of space and time, and therefore distinctions between individuals, are not ultimately real. So why can there