

# Schopenhauer and the Nature of Philosophy



JONATHAN HEAD

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Jonathan Head

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*To the memory of my grandparents — Ivy, Rita, Len and Lesley*



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## NOTE

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# Note on Abbreviations and Referencing

References to Schopenhauer's works use the following abbreviations:

BM: *On the Basis of Morality*

DA: *Schopenhauer's Letters to Dr. David Asher*

EF: *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (1st edition)

FR: *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (2nd edition)

FW: *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will*

GB: *Gessamelte Briefe*

MR: *Manuscript Remains*

PP: *Parerga and Paralipomena*

VR: *On Vision and Colours*

WN: *On the Will in Nature*

WWR: *The World as Will and Representation*

Full details of the editions used are in the bibliography, with *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Schopenhauer* preferred, where available. Page references are to the pagination of Hübscher's edition: Schopenhauer, A. *Sämtliche Werke in 7 Bänden*. Edited by A. Hübscher, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1937. Exceptions to this are EF (page references to the *Cambridge Edition*), GB and DA (referenced by section number), and MR (page references to the Payne edition of translations in English). References to Kant's works are by the *Akademie-Edition* Vol. 1–29 of *Gesammelte Schriften*. Volumes consulted are from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Kant* (listed in the bibliography).



# Introduction

The intention of this book is to examine Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, and to begin exploring the consequences of his metaphilosophy for our wider understanding of his philosophical system as a whole. Such an attempt, as far as I am aware, has not been made before,<sup>1</sup> and thus it is hoped that this book will shed some much-needed light on Schopenhauer's philosophy, as well as providing a foundation for further scholarship on his work.

Of course, 'metaphilosophy' itself is not necessarily a clear term.<sup>2</sup> I generally understand a metaphilosophy as a conception of the proper aims, methods and scope of philosophy. In broad terms, it seeks to answer three main (interrelated) questions: 'What is philosophy? How should we do it? and Why should we do it?' (Overgaard et al. 2013, 11). When construed in such a manner, metaphilosophy considers how philosophy *should* be done, rather than how it is in fact done. I argue that Schopenhauer has a very developed and nuanced account of how philosophy ought to be done, given its aims, limitations and intellectual sources, which we can find reflected in how he seeks to communicate his own ideas to us, the philosophical reader. Thus, throughout this work, I will be exploring Schopenhauer's underlying metaphilosophy (as revealed both explicitly and implicitly in his works), the manner in which it informs various parts of his philosophy<sup>3</sup> and the way his ideas are presented to his audience.

More specifically, in order to explore Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, I seek to answer these questions:

1. What are the aims of Schopenhauer's philosophy?
2. What can philosophy achieve for the individual?

3. What did Schopenhauer view as the working methods and intellectual sources of philosophy, and what are the concomitant limitations that philosophy has to operate within?
4. What kind of explanations can philosophy offer?
5. How can philosophy be communicated?
6. What is the nature of the language in which philosophy is to be communicated?
7. How accessible is philosophical insight to most people?
8. What is the relationship between philosophy, religion, art, and natural science?
9. What kind of person is a philosopher?

I argue that answering these questions as they arise in Schopenhauer's works will enable us to gain a deeper understanding of his philosophy and could aid us in answering some of the long-standing interpretive issues surrounding it.

Schopenhauer envisions a dual purpose for his philosophy, encompassing both the search for truth and the attempt to satisfy the need for a kind of therapy or salvation, in the face of the difficulties that confront us all as human beings. Though philosophy is limited to being communicated at the level of conceptual thought, it can nevertheless tap into an intuitive sense of the wrongness of the world that is part of the universal human experience, which can in turn help inspire our own individual search for consolation and salvation. At its most powerful, philosophy is able to provide a spur to reflection upon both the world and ourselves that can foster new perspectives upon human existence that are both challenging and consoling.

The first chapter of this work focuses initially on the question of why some human beings engage with philosophy, and why they should continue to do so if they are able. Schopenhauer's answer to this question revolves around the key notion of the 'need for metaphysics' as the motivation for philosophical reflection. The need for metaphysics, as far as Schopenhauer understands it, is a natural desire that all human beings have for explanation and consolation, in the face of the recognition of pessimistic truths regarding the world we live in. Exploring the notion of the need for metaphysics in Schopenhauer's philosophy leads to questions regarding the relation between philosophy, religion, and science, insofar as our desire for explanation underlies these three human endeavours.

Schopenhauer describes religion as meeting the metaphysical need in a qualified sense (insofar as it is only able to present truth behind a veil of allegory) and science as not attempting to satisfy this need. The contrast we can draw between philosophy, religion and science is our entryway into understanding his conception of the aims of philosophy, including offering a distinctively moral explanation of the world. In addition, the peculiar nature

of philosophical reflection in meeting our need for metaphysics will aid us in starting to answer the questions of the accessibility of philosophy and who precisely can be a true philosopher. The possibility of philosophy offering such a distinctive explanation of things is also explored, as a preparatory for our later examination of aspects of the metaphysics of will that reveal something of a possible soteriology in which we are liberated from a life dominated by suffering and want.

In chapter 2, we move on to the key metaphilosophical question of the sources and working-methods of philosophy. In particular, the discussion will focus on the important distinction Schopenhauer strikes between the objective and subjective standpoints, both of which, he believes, can provide philosophical insights. Specifically, he argues that both standpoints can give evidence in favour of his key metaphysical claim, namely, the identification of the essence of the world with will. While it is well-known that Schopenhauer believes the truth of his metaphysics can be shown from the subjective standpoint, that is, by taking the nature of consciousness as a philosophical starting point, his similar claims regarding the use of the objective standpoint, considering the nature of the objective world as it presents itself to us, have been relatively overlooked. I explore the way in which Schopenhauer believes the use of the objective standpoint in philosophy can help corroborate metaphysical findings originally garnered from the subjective standpoint, an approach which he discusses more fully in his later works. Using these discussions, I argue for a reading of Schopenhauer's use of the subjective and objective standpoints that stresses their compatibility and the fruitfulness of their interaction, though the former is granted primary status at the foundations of metaphysical reflection. On the way, I also consider some competing interpretations of Schopenhauer's use of the objective standpoint that have been offered in the literature to date.

Following this, the third chapter focuses on metaphilosophical questions concerning the communication of philosophy. Schopenhauer's theory of language and communication is an important, often-overlooked aspect of his philosophy. We consider the value and nature of philosophical writing for Schopenhauer, as well as the difficult limits which the philosopher has to operate within in the attempt to communicate their metaphysical insights (thus also touching upon the question of the limitations that the philosopher faces in their proper working-methods). As part of this, I outline Schopenhauer's account of the communication of philosophical insights to others through the medium of dialogue and texts.

Schopenhauer argues that communication of metaphysical truths is hindered by their fundamental basis in intuition, which cannot be fully communicated as something is 'lost in translation' as data from experience is abstracted into concepts. As communication takes place at the conceptual



level, philosophical texts and dialogue will inevitably fail to fully capture the genuine philosophical insights that the philosopher wishes to communicate. I argue that due to these limits on communication, Schopenhauer sees the function of the philosophical text or dialogue more as an aid to philosophical reflection, rather than as primarily communicating metaphysical truths in a straightforward manner. The reader will have to take an active role in response to the text by endeavouring to discover the metaphysical truths which the text points towards through their own intellectual resources.

The fourth chapter focuses primarily on the question of the soteriological aims of some of our intellectual endeavours, and the role philosophy potentially has to play in this quest. In particular, I discuss the possible progressive impact of Schopenhauer's system on those who feel the need for a philosophical explanation of the world, and how this shapes the right approach to his works (also bearing in mind the earlier discussion of his theory of communication) and our interpretation of his crucial account of the negation or denial of the will. I begin with an examination of the Schopenhauerian notion of the 'better consciousness,' which recurs in his early notebooks during the years leading up to the publication of *WWR*. Though the term is later jettisoned, and does not appear in the published works, I argue that it nevertheless sets up a general metaphilosophical theme for Schopenhauer that continues throughout his philosophical career, in that he is interested in exploring the idea that human beings can transcend the pain-filled existence we currently endure through the adoption of a higher kind of consciousness.

I also explore Schopenhauer's account of practical reason, which has an important role to play in the development of virtue and philosophical reflection, but ultimately pales in theoretical and practical significance in comparison with genuine philosophical insight through intuition. As part of this, I explore Schopenhauer's approach to Stoicism, arguing that he sees this ethical approach as having glimmers of truth in it (for example, in realising the potential practical benefits that practical reason can bring us, as well as the need to suppress our painful willing), but ultimately falling into error due to the overemphasis it places on reason alone as being able to bring about genuine moral and soteriological development.

This chapter also considers the theme of the development of philosophical reflection through the different stages of life, with a focus here on those who have reached old age without garnering the benefits of the negation or denial of the will. We will see that such individuals have become emotionally deadened as a defence mechanism against the pain-filled world we live in, and thus no longer substantively engage with the world, though they very much remain part of it. Finally, I seek to expand my account of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy and soteriology beyond the scale of the individual, to that of across generations. We see that Schopenhauer indeed commits to a sense in

which the human species as a whole can undergo moral development and as a result the insights and practical benefits connected to metaphysical cognition could potentially grow across different lifetimes.

Finally, in the last chapter, I consider recent competing conceptions of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, focusing on the manner in which we may read his system as unreasonably speculative. Thus, this chapter touches on the connected questions of the limits of philosophy and the manner in which it can and ought to be communicated. In addition to considering other interpretations of Schopenhauer on the question of the apparently more speculative aspects of his system, I will also look at recent aestheticist interpretations which attempt to draw parallels between his accounts of philosophical method and the production of art. I argue that though we have much gain with regard to understanding the exposition of the metaphysics of the will from such a perspective, there has been an unfortunate tendency to align art and philosophy too closely from a Schopenhauerian perspective.

I also discuss recent considerations concerning a potential metaphorical interpretation of some of Schopenhauer's key metaphysical claims. After considering some of the evidence for a metaphorical interpretation of claims such as his identification of the essence of the world with will, as well as some of the difficulties facing such an interpretation, I argue that we can understand Schopenhauer as using a number of rhetorical devices (such as metaphor and metonymy) in his philosophical texts, with a view to encouraging his readers to come to genuine philosophical insight by themselves. Further, I seek to show how a number of objections to a metaphorical reading of Schopenhauer's philosophy can be overcome, including worries concerning his distinction between philosophy and religion, as well as his adherence to concept-empiricism. Such considerations may lead us to reconceive key metaphysical claims in Schopenhauer's philosophy, as well as his place in the history of philosophy more generally.

In addition, I build on recent scholarship on Schopenhauer's approach to metaphysical issues and his underlying epistemological commitments through the prism of the distinction he draws between illuminism and rationalism, as the two major strands of philosophical thought we find in the history of the discipline. While he affirms his allegiance to rationalism, particularly as found in Kantian philosophy, he nevertheless allows that illuminism acts as a surreptitious guide, a 'hidden compass,' for the direction of his philosophical reflections. I argue that this use of illuminism does allow for an element of speculation in his metaphilosophy that marks a definitive step beyond the epistemic limits set by his predecessor, Kant.

As explained previously, it is my intention to lay out Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy in a detailed and clear manner, as well as considering some of the extant secondary literature on Schopenhauer that touches upon

metaphilosophical questions. I understand that some of the claims I am making are contentious, but I hope that specialists and non-specialists alike will give the arguments contained within a fair hearing. As I feel that I am laying the groundwork on this topic to a certain extent, I do not wish to criticise Schopenhauer's account of the nature of philosophy, the nature of the philosopher as an individual, and so forth. I believe that we should seek to understand Schopenhauer's views on metaphilosophical questions in detail before we set out to criticise him, and that merely trying to lay out his views is a sufficient task for this monograph. For now, at least, I leave it to others to form their own judgement of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophical views.

Further to this, it should be noted that I am not attempting to trace, in a detailed manner, any development in Schopenhauer's approach to metaphilosophy from his earlier to later works. As I draw freely from texts published throughout his career, particularly from later editions of these works published towards the end of his life, I limit myself to claiming that I am attempting to describe Schopenhauer's later, more settled view on metaphilosophy, worked out particularly explicitly in the 1840s and 1850s. However, I argue, particularly in chapter 4, that Schopenhauer's general purposes for his philosophy are largely set in the very early years of his philosophical development. I also largely trust Schopenhauer's claim that his philosophy (including his metaphilosophy) underwent little *substantial* development over the course of his writing career (see WWR1, xxi), and thus I am not overly worried about discerning what kind of development there may have been in his metaphilosophical views from his very earliest works onward.

## NOTES

1. There have been secondary works that touch on aspects of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, and have perhaps offered metaphilosophical interpretations of Schopenhauer from a more limited perspective (some of which I consider later on, such as attempts to attribute an aestheticist metaphilosophy to Schopenhauer), but I hope to bring together a more complete picture of this topic than has been attempted before.

2. Williamson prefers the term 'philosophy of philosophy' (2007, ix), due to the potential implication that metaphilosophy is not in itself a part of philosophy, but I will still use 'metaphilosophy' for convenience, as long as it is recognised that an exploration in metaphilosophy is very much a philosophical enterprise.

3. Though Schopenhauer's underlying conception of the nature of philosophy should potentially shape our understanding of all aspects of his thought, I will not be able to fully explore this in this work; rather, I will seek to focus on those parts of his philosophy whose interpretation could potentially be most affected by a more nuanced account of his metaphilosophy.

# The Need for Metaphysics

In this chapter, we begin our examination of Schopenhauer's view of the nature of philosophy by considering his account of the initial motivation for philosophical reflection. Essentially, we want to answer the question: why do human beings engage in philosophy? As we shall see, answering this question for Schopenhauer involves considering the distinctive nature of human beings (given that we are the only creatures who seemingly are drawn to philosophical reflection), as well as clarifying the distinction between the aims and methods of philosophy, and those of religion and the natural sciences. For Schopenhauer, all these intellectual pursuits that human beings engage with are motivated by a common 'need for metaphysics'<sup>1</sup>, though the extent to which they meet this need (if at all) differs across disciplines.

I argue that the manner in which philosophy is able to meet the need for metaphysics shapes Schopenhauer's understanding of his own philosophical project, in not only determining his aims but also his working-methods throughout the presentation of his system. The unique manner in which philosophy meets the metaphysical need leads to a distinctive conception of its aims and methods: as a discipline that aims to deal directly with matters at 'the end of explanation,' where rational reflection begins to flounder and communication through language becomes increasingly difficult. This discussion will thus lead us to the following chapter, in which I discuss the foundational working-methods and epistemic sources of philosophy.

## THE ROOTS OF REFLECTION

Why do human beings engage in philosophical reflection? That is the question that Schopenhauer attempts to answer in the section 'On Humanity's Metaphysical Need,' in *WWR2*. The attempt to answer this question leads Schopenhauer to a whole host of others, and it is these that we shall be considering in this chapter. Of particular relevance to us will not only be the

origins and aims of philosophy, but also that of religion and science. We will also be led to consider the moral significance of the world for Schopenhauer, as philosophy is grounded in a deep sense of the fundamental wrongness of existence itself, a claim that forms his pessimistic outlook.

The need for metaphysics marks, for Schopenhauer, the very beginnings of philosophical reflection.<sup>2</sup> In an early note from 1813, he speaks of how he, and presumably how any genuine philosopher, is driven to philosophical reflection:

Every philosopher has become one through a perplexity which is Plato's *thaumazein* [astonishment], which he calls a *mala philosophicon pathos* [very philosophical emotion]. Now what distinguishes the genuine philosopher from the ungenue is that for the former there has arisen a perplexity concerning the world, for the latter a perplexity concerning some existing system. (MR1, 81)

The roots of genuine philosophical reflection lie in the world presenting itself to us as something which potentially astonishes and perplexes. It is a direct questioning rooted in the individual's own experience, rather than a mere intellectual interest in philosophical ideas. Schopenhauer claims that, as we gaze at the world, "[all] genuinely metaphysical problems . . . incessantly force themselves on human consciousness" (PP1, 28). The genuine philosopher is the individual who pays attention to these problems that are naturally forced upon them, simply through reflection upon their own experience.

However, the initial distinguishing feature of philosophy, in comparison with natural science, is less a focus on the presentation of the data of experience of the world and our own inner life, but rather on attempting to explain the deeper significance of this data with a view to quelling what might be a rather troubling perplexity.<sup>3</sup> Human beings, as Schopenhauer explains, are the only animals that reflect upon the very fact of their own existence and this leads them to consider fundamental questions regarding themselves and the world. They are able to do so due to the relative independence of their will from intellect (which allows them to reflect on matters that are not related to their immediate desires) and their 'reflective awareness' (*Besinnung*) (WWR2, 175) given their capacity for reason. What particularly troubles reflective human beings is the knowledge that they will inevitably die and all of the projects for which they strive will ultimately come to naught (WWR2, 176).

Though I will discuss the distinction between intuition and reason as possible intellectual sources for philosophy in more detail in chapter 3, it is worth introducing this topic briefly at this point. To begin with, intuition is a broad term for any kind of immediate experience, including of the objects of our ordinary experience, such as tables or chairs. Such experiences provide the

basic building-blocks for reflective reason, which is able to generate abstract representations or concepts on the basis of our intuition. As Schopenhauer puts it, “the world of reflection as a whole is based on the intuitive world as its cognitive ground” (WWR1, 49), which is to say that our higher-order conceptual thought relies entirely upon what we have learned as individuals through our immediate experiences. As human beings with distinctively rational capacities, we are thereby able to reflect upon our experiences in an abstract manner that forms the basis for our philosophical endeavours.

While all other animals are, due to their more limited intellectual capacities, left unreflectively in the present moment, human beings (through the use of our reason) are able to reflect in a wider scope upon their past and future, which leads to the realisation of the certainty of death,<sup>4</sup> given that we are part of a wide sphere of nature in which all things face a finite existence. Human beings have a unique capacity to reason, unavailable to all other animals, which definitively sets us apart and ensures that our form of existence is potentially filled with more dread and suffering than those of other animals. As Janaway notes, while our heightened intellectual capabilities bring certain advantages, such as being able to ‘acquire, communicate and store knowledge, perform logical reasoning, be scientific investigators, found societies and undertake vast communal projects,’ it nevertheless adds to the pessimistic tenor of our existence:

The lives of animals are like ours, in that they are strung together from episodes of striving and suffering, but because we can remember the past and conceptualize the future we are full of guilts and anxieties about satisfied or unsatisfied willing that stretch far beyond the immediate present, and so our capacity for suffering is much greater. (2014, 37)

Thus, our need for metaphysics, including the desire to achieve consolation in the face of our expected death, is linked to our capacity for reasoned reflection, that is, the manner in which our reason opens up the epistemic horizon for us. As we are able to ‘see’ more of the world, by projecting ourselves both into the past and the future, our realisation of its unfortunate nature becomes even greater, and thereby our desire for explanation and consolation grows too.

The troubling aspect of such reflection is not only limited to the inevitability of death, because we can also see that, as ‘all things must pass’, all projects that the individual wishes to undertake in their lifetime will only be temporary and will ultimately be destroyed over the course of time. As Casucci argues, Schopenhauer believes that we are naturally struck by the impermanency of all things: “the fluidity of everything that manifests itself in time, or in the derived forms of knowledge that belong to it . . . [Everything]

becomes nothing, as much as every present is only an inconsistent line between the nothingness of the past (which is no longer), and the nothingness of the future (which has yet come to pass)” (2017, 128). Not only are human beings struck with the certainty that they will die, but they also realise that anything they try to achieve in the life that they do have will ultimately come to naught, due to the unstoppable fluidity of the course of time and the ultimately destructive impact of its passage.

Further filling out the grounds of the need for metaphysics, Schopenhauer also refers to a recognition of the world as filled with suffering and want as another troubling factor of the world that reflective human beings recognise as potentially requiring explanation (WWR2, 176). Indeed, Schopenhauer goes as far to say that “[if] our life were endless and painless, it might never occur to anyone to ask why the world exists and has precisely the nature it does” (WWR2, 177). If life was fundamentally pleasant, then we would not seek to question it; however, we find that our existence is dominated by want, pain and suffering, and that leads us to seek an explanation, partly as an attempt to find meaning in our difficult existence.

Another aspect of the ground for our wonder at the world lies in our realisation the world might not have been the case (WWR2, 189). Our reason allows us to occupy an abstract viewpoint that sees the world as something that might not have been and thus potentially requires an explanation, in line with other contingent events in the world. Indeed, we may even come to believe that out of the two options, we might have chosen the possible situation in which the world does not exist:

[We] very quickly come to regard the world as something whose non-existence is not only conceivable but even preferable . . . [given] the sight of *the ill and evil* in the world which, even if they stood in the most just relation to each other, indeed even if they were far outweighed by the good, are nevertheless things that should absolutely never exist in any way, shape or form. (WWR2, 189–190)<sup>5</sup>

Given all this, we naturally come to wonder about ourselves and the world around us, though very much in a troubled way. Schopenhauer speaks of this wonder as “fundamentally disconcerting and depressing” (WWR2, 189), and this ‘troubled wonder’ manifests itself as the ‘human need for metaphysics,’ which is felt from childhood (WWR2, 176).

All human beings feel such a need, and thus it is a universal feature of the human experience. The riddle of existence is something that strikes all human beings, regardless of their individual circumstances (WWR2, 189), leading Schopenhauer to claim that if “there is anything in the world to be desired . . . it is that a beam of light should fall on the obscurity of our being and offer us some sort of key to this perplexing existence in which nothing

is clear except its misery and nothingness” (WWR2, 180). The enterprise of constructing general explanations of the world in metaphysics therefore has a deep significance for the whole of the human species, as it answers a painful need for explanation and consolation that all feel throughout their lives.

So, to return to our initial question: why do human beings philosophise? We naturally reflect upon the world and our experience in a way that inspires a deep-seated need for explanation and consolation, given that we are ultimately troubled by what we discover. We are struck by the necessity of death, the impermanency and contingency of all things, and that our lives seem to be unavoidably dominated by dissatisfaction and suffering, which leads us both to want to understand and to seek an escape. It is with this view of the underlying motivation for philosophical reflection that Schopenhauer offers his own works. Thus, our reading of Schopenhauer needs to bear in mind that he is seeking to meet this universal need in all human beings for both explanation and consolation. However, it is not just philosophical reflection that is motivated by our metaphysical need, in that religious belief is also grounded in this fundamental drive that we all share. The natural sciences also stand as a human endeavour that seeks explanations, albeit within the strict constraints of the world of appearance. As a result of these connections, discussing the relation between science, religion and philosophy in the next section will help us to discover what is distinctive about the philosophical enterprise, as far as Schopenhauer is concerned.

## PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Though the metaphysical need is universal, human beings can respond to the need for metaphysics in different ways. In addition, due to differences in intellectual capacities, different human beings can find satisfaction for this need in various ways (WWR2, 176.). Individuals of higher intellectual capacities and greater education are struck more by the kind of troubling wonder that leads to the need for metaphysics than the average person: the riddle of existence “appears in consciousness all the more clearly and steadily the brighter and more thoughtful that consciousness is, and the more material it has absorbed through education” (WWR, 189). Some individuals are able to separate their intellect from the will more than others (thus freeing up their thinking from the task of merely considering how to satisfy our immediate desires) and it is those who are able to do this to a particularly great extent who are thereby drawn to philosophical reflection. The clear recognition of the death and the finitude of all things in the world inevitably leads to the fundamental questions considered by philosophy and religion, which both aim to answer such questions by offering a general explanation of all things.



The difference between human beings in terms of their intellect and education has the consequence that there will not be a single metaphysics that is suitable for all (WWR2, 180). True philosophical reflection is only capable of being undertaken by a select few, despite being the deepest kind of reflection available to a human being, and thus the most desirable in terms of fulfilling our need for metaphysics. Philosophical metaphysical systems, in order to be understood, require “reflection, education, leisure and judgement,” advantages available to a rare group of human beings: As a result, philosophy will ultimately “be accessible only to a tiny fraction of humanity, and can arise and thrive only in advanced civilizations” (WWR2, 181). Schopenhauer believes that intellectual power by itself is insufficient for genuine philosophical reflection, in that societal and personal conditions need to be right too. The society needs to be fairly sophisticated, to the extent that some individuals are able to live a life of leisure in which their intellectual capacities can be developed.

As an expression of the desire to discover an explanation for our existence, metaphysics is the attempt to explain phenomena as a whole. Schopenhauer defines metaphysics as “any cognition that claims to go beyond the possibility of experience, which is to say beyond nature or the given appearance of things, in order to disclose something about that which in some sense or another conditions appearance” (WWR2, 180). Schopenhauer writes of events in nature, such as our own actions, having a metaphysical significance “that stretches out beyond the mere appearance of things and so beyond all possibility of experience as well” (BM, 261). We are able to understand the world as having a significance in a manner that points toward a deeper reality, one that lies beyond our everyday experience, but nevertheless that we seek to grasp in some way through our metaphysical reflections.

This definition of metaphysics allows us to distinguish it from the natural sciences, which focuses on a different endpoint for its explanations. Science fails to be genuinely metaphysical due to it being merely concerned with appearances. Why are some drawn to the natural sciences instead of philosophy? Some individuals will only marvel at unusual phenomena, and then try “to reduce these rare appearances to more familiar ones” (WWR2, 176). Such is the character of the natural scientist, whose concern with appearances leads them to explain those particular phenomena in terms of perhaps less mysterious phenomena.

However, others will instead be “able to entertain a sense of wonder about habitual and everyday things,” with the consequence that they will “problematize the *universal aspects of appearance*,” and such is the mark of “the truly philosophical state” (ibid.). Philosophy is therefore rooted in a more universalised reflection about the world, and thus tries to offer a more general account of phenomena that looks to its significance in a common ground.

Whether one is inclined to the narrow sphere of explanation in natural science or will only be satisfied with a more general explanation depends on the disposition and intellectual character of the individual in question. Those who are still caught up in the surface appearance of the world are more likely to be satisfied by the limited explanations offered by the natural sciences, which are only able to explain things via natural causality and generally have a more utilitarian approach to understanding the world (whereby we view things in relation to the satisfaction of our desires). Those more inclined to philosophy, on the other hand, will never be satisfied with such explanations.

Schopenhauer argues that there is also a requirement for a metaphysics of the masses, religion, which is for those who “are not capable of thinking but only of believing, and are not receptive to reasons but only to authority” (WWR2, 181). Religion is characterized by Schopenhauer as being largely motivated by a fear of death (similarly to philosophy), which is counteracted in the belief-system by the promise of immortality (WWR2, 177). Schopenhauer argues that the promise of personal immortality is the key doctrine of religion around which all other dogma is shaped, including any commitment to the existence of divine beings, to the extent that religious believers are more concerned with life after death than the existence of a god or gods: “if one could prove that continuation after death is incompatible with the existence of gods . . . [religious believers] would soon sacrifice these gods to personal immortality and become avid atheists” (ibid.).

Some religions more satisfactorily meet the metaphysical need than others: for example, Schopenhauer attributes the “almost superhuman conceptions that were recorded in the Upanishads of the *Vedas*” to their ancient origins, at a time when,

those who were significantly closer to the origin of the human race and the well-springs of organic nature than we are at present also had both *greater energy in their powers of intuitive cognition and also a more accurate cast of mind*, which made them capable of a purer, more immediate grasp of the essence of nature and thus able to satisfy the metaphysical need in a worthier fashion. (WWR2, 178—my emphasis)

The value of a given religion, in terms of meeting the need for metaphysics, rests in its source, namely, in the kind of people it sprang from and their attendant capabilities. If a given community has a greater capacity for deep reflection upon the world, through a strong power of intuition and the ability to attain an objective cognition of the nature of their own experience, then the religion in that society will meet the need for metaphysics in a more worthy manner.

Schopenhauer argues that both philosophy and religion attempt to answer the need for metaphysics by offering a general explanation of the world. Indeed, as Ryan notes, we can see the parallels between philosophy and religion exemplified in Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will itself, in that "Schopenhauer's philosophy contains all the theoretical elements of a positive religion—a metaphysic, a theory of immortality, a doctrine of pure virtue and a soteriology" (2010, 67). However, while both kinds of systems (philosophical and religious) require justification for any conviction that might be invested in them, the kind of justification available for them is different. Philosophical reflection is a largely individual endeavour, with any justification for a given philosophical system coming ultimately from within:

We can only reach [philosophical] cognition<sup>6</sup> in a way entirely different from purely *objective* cognition, which remains mere representation, by making use of the *self-consciousness* of the subject of cognition, that occurs only as an animal individual, and making it the interpreter of the *consciousness of other things*, that is, of the intuiting intellect. This is the path I have taken and it is the only correct one, the narrow gateway to truth. (PP1, 100–101)

So, a given philosophical system can receive justification from within, grounded in reflection upon individual experience, which can form the basis of an interpretation of the world as it appears to us. Religious systems, on the other hand, rely upon external authority for their justification, including proclaimed unimpeachable revelation and threats of future punishment, through the power of the Church, which is used particularly effectively in the indoctrination of the young, leading to a situation where religious dogma becomes an unquestioned second nature (WWR2, 181).<sup>7</sup>

Schopenhauer argues that once a religious belief system has become firmly embedded in the mind, it can be very difficult to dislodge it, partly due to its imperviousness with regard to evidence that counts against it, and a confirmation bias that immediately latches on to any evidence that counts for it:

In the mind in which it once lodges itself or is even born, a *hypothesis* leads a life that resembles that of an organism to the extent that it absorbs from its external world only what it conducive and homogeneous to it, whereas it either does not allow what it heterogeneous and harmful to approach it, or, if unavoidably exposed to something, it excretes it again wholly intact. (PP2, 540)

One of the continuing tasks of religious institutions at a social level will be to ensure that the cycle of indoctrination continues, such that the religious beliefs that are embedded, and thus seem so obvious, for one generation (to the extent that they seem to be a set of innate truths) will then be passed on to the next. Philosophy cannot, and should not, operate this way.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to the detailed and complex dogmatic religious systems that children are indoctrinated into, philosophy should begin with as few assumptions as possible (WWR2, 208). The nature of philosophical systems, in containing their own validation and “appeals to thinking and conviction,” leads them to claim truth “in a strict and proper sense,”<sup>9</sup> while religion, as intended for those who are “incapable of investigation or thought” and thus cannot access true philosophical insight, has only the obligation to be true “in an allegorical sense” (WWR2, 183), through a ‘veil of allegory.’ Allegories are easier to grasp than abstract philosophical systems, often presenting incomprehensible mysteries that “cannot be clearly thought, much less literally true,” and are “the only adequate way of allowing common sense and crude understanding to *feel* something that would otherwise be incomprehensible to it” (ibid.). So, while philosophers attempt to express metaphysical truths in a direct manner, religions should be taking up the task of attempting to express these same truths in an allegorical manner suitable for the masses.

If we seek the truth concerning the world, then our need to achieve this will receive a higher satisfaction through a direct grasp of philosophical-metaphysical truths, as opposed to via the indirect route of allegory. Recall also that, as far as Schopenhauer is concerned, some religions are more successful at meeting the metaphysical need due to their ideas stemming from individuals who have greater powers of intuition and objective cognition. Given this, it stands to reason that genuine philosophers will also have these capacities.

So, we can see that Schopenhauer proposes quite a positive picture for religion, in that it is portrayed as allowing the masses to satisfy their troubling need for metaphysics, and for religious belief-systems to have an element of truth to them, albeit veiled behind a screen of allegory (WWR2, 185). Further to this, as religious belief can have an action-guiding function, and “allegory is always structured in practice so as to lead just where literal truth would also lead” (WWR2, 184), religious belief can have a positive impact upon the behaviour of the masses also. Summing this up, Schopenhauer writes:

[Religions] are therefore very good at taking the place of [philosophical] metaphysics for the great mass of people, who cannot be obliged to think; this is in part with a view to practice, as a beacon for their actions, as the public standard for rectitude and virtue . . . in part [also] as an indispensable comfort in the difficult sufferings of life, where it completely replaces an objectively true metaphysics by lifting human beings above themselves and their temporal existence. (ibid.)

Religious belief can play a similar role in an individual’s life to that of philosophical reflection for someone with a superior mind, in offering an

explanation of (and consolation for) the world we find ourselves in, as well as offering a standard of behaviour for the masses to follow.

However, differing religious belief-systems can fulfill this idealised role for religion in society to greater or lesser degrees, depending upon the truths its allegories contain (WWR2, 186). Some veils of allegory are more beneficial, and hence more desirable, than others, in that some systems of allegory point to metaphysical truths in a more effective manner than others. In particular, Schopenhauer argues that the most valuable religious belief-systems will at least be fundamentally pessimistic in tone, in line with that pinnacle of all philosophical systems, his metaphysics of will. If a religious belief-system does not at least admit the fundamental wrongness of the world, then it cannot begin to offer an explanation of (and consolation for) it. In addition, it will ultimately go against the deeply held universal recognition of pessimism (WWR2, 188).

Further to this, some religious myths will have practical benefits with regard to the actions undertaken by individuals by offering narratives that aid a concrete grasp of moral principles: myth can be “a sufficient guide to action,” in that it can help to “[illuminate] the ethical meaning of action, albeit through pictorial representation in the manner of cognition that is eternally foreign to this meaning (i.e., according to the principle of sufficient reason)” (WWR1, 420). If a myth achieves this, then it could be called “a postulate of practical reason,” yet at the same time “[having] the great advantage of containing only elements that lie before our eyes in the real world” (ibid.). So, Schopenhauer argues, such myths are beliefs that we can theoretically commit to that have a discernible impact upon our behaviour, using content from our experience of the world around us.

How a myth is supposed to provide such a practical guide is best seen through the example of Schopenhauer’s discussion of the transmigration of souls,<sup>10</sup> which “teaches that you must atone for all the suffering you inflict on other creatures over the course of your life by enduring precisely the same suffering in a following life in this very same world” (ibid.), to the extent that if you treat, say, an animal in a certain wrongful way in this life, then you will undergo the same kind of treatment as that sort of animal in a later life. At the same time, it promises a potential path to salvation in offering a reward which you can attain “from the noblest deeds and fullest resignation,” when you are “reborn in a better, nobler form, as Brahman, as sage, as saint” (WWR1, 421). While such a myth is misleading in one sense, it nevertheless, through the veil of allegory, reveals metaphysical insights in a manner that will have an impact upon the behaviour of the masses that could not be achieved otherwise.

The potential reward of not being born again is the mythical expression of the potential route to salvation open to us via the negation of the will,

which, as we shall see, is a notion that is difficult to communicate and for most people to understand. The claim that you will suffer that which you inflict on others is an allegorical way of expressing the insight that all things share in a unified essence underlying the world, and thus from a metaphysical perspective, you are inflicting suffering upon yourself. Such a myth, then, has the theoretical benefit of presenting metaphysical truths in a manner that is accessible to a wider sphere of people, as well as putting across practical recommendations with regard to the painfulness of willing and the value of compassion towards others.

As part of Schopenhauer's positive approach to religion as it relates to philosophy, he allows for religion to be able to express the core metaphysical truths of his philosophy through mythology (for example, he speaks of the "ancient *Mahabharata*" as "a mythical expression of the . . . truth" (WN, 36) regarding the body as expression of will). It is for this reason that he can claim the "agreement of peoples" with regard to pessimism, insofar as the pessimism of the metaphysics of will is present in "the fundamental idea of Brahmanism and Buddhism, and even Christianity" (PP1, 40).<sup>11</sup>

The connection that Schopenhauer posits between religion and philosophy, with both in fact being brought under the umbrella of 'metaphysics,' and the manner in which religion, or at least some parts of it, is said to have an element of truth to it, might be surprising to those who know Schopenhauer as an atheist philosopher. Schopenhauer was indeed an atheist, but nevertheless he sees religion as having a positive role to play, both in theoretical terms, as carrying truths under a veil of allegory, and practically, for example, in encouraging individuals to take up ascetic practices (WWR2, 693–96). While not anti-science in any decisive way, Schopenhauer sees the admittedly impressive progress of science as tending to lead to "to a crass and stupid materialism" (WN, x) in which all of nature is incorrectly reduced to purely physical events ruled by the laws of nature. In addition, he argues that "ever-expanding empirical and historical knowledge" has encouraged disbelief, which "threatens to reject not only the form of Christianity, but also the spirit and sense of Christianity (which extend much farther than Christianity itself) and deliver humankind to *moral* materialism, which is much more dangerous than . . . chemical materialism" (WN, xii). Schopenhauer does believe that there is some form of moral order in the world, and as such, he worries that the influence that science has on society in encouraging disbelief amongst the masses, who before would have relied upon religion as a moral foundation, could be deleterious for the moral well-being of the individual. Although it is regrettable that not all people can access philosophical insights, with the theoretical and practical benefits they offer, nevertheless religion has a valuable role to play in the life of most individuals.

To sum up, science falls short by focusing on the explanation of specific phenomena, while religion offers allegories and a guide for conduct that has genuine value in the life of an individual who is unable to engage in genuine philosophical reflection. In the following section, we will look in more detail at the relation between philosophy, religion and science for Schopenhauer by considering the explanations of phenomena that they offer, and in this manner explore further the distinctive nature of the philosophical endeavour.

## THE END OF EXPLANATION

For Schopenhauer, philosophy is an attempt to meet our need for metaphysics—a natural desire that we have, as human beings, for an explanation of ourselves and the world that attempts to go beyond the limits of our experience. The need for metaphysics is grounded in a sense of the wrongness of life and that things could have been otherwise: our lives could perhaps have been better, or the world might not have existed at all. Metaphysical reflection is driven both by a strong intuitive faculty and the workings of reason. However, distinctively philosophical reflection is not open to all, due to differences in these natural capacities, as well as the education available to different people. As such, most people are drawn away from the higher satisfaction for the need for metaphysics that philosophy offers.

Both the natural sciences and religion seek to provide explanations, though of different kinds. The natural sciences has a narrower focus on certain kinds of phenomena and seeks to explain them in terms of fundamental natural forces, while the allegories of religion can indirectly communicate metaphysical truths with varying degrees of success. Philosophy seeks to go beyond both religion and science by presenting metaphysical truths directly and by securely gaining cognition of that which is at the very limits of our understanding: it thus operates at the very ‘end of explanation,’ given the limits of our cognitive faculties and communication.

To begin with, natural science ultimately has limits in terms of the explanations it can provide, such that it cannot itself answer to our need for deep insight into the essence of the world itself; rather, it must remain on the surface level of phenomena, measuring how events follow each other in line with the laws of nature in order to determine those laws, without being able to offer an explanation as to why those laws are the way they are. As Schopenhauer argues, on its own, physics requires external metaphysical support, insofar as its explanations rely upon the supposition of underlying laws and forces of nature (WWR2, 191). Given that such entities are mysterious and require explanation themselves, we are forced to look beyond the physical and engage in metaphysical investigation.

A potential complete physical explanation of the world faces a further problem in that, Schopenhauer argues, there is no potential first cause within the physical realm that could act as an explanation for all things. If we wish to trace the causal chain backwards in order to find a complete physical explanation for things, there will be no ultimate physical starting point at which our explanatory regress stops, and so we would have to abandon the attempt to stay within purely physical explanation and look to an underlying cause of nature in our metaphysical investigations (WWR2, 191–92). Thus, science will always have to ultimately give way to philosophy, due to the limits of the explanations it offers.

It is up to philosophy to make up for the shortcomings of physical explanation by following that ‘different path’ and giving us the opportunity to find the kind of complete explanation of things that we were looking for through other means. Schopenhauer thus understands metaphysics at taking over when our investigations reach the limits of natural science, and it is only through bypassing these that we can have a direct experience of the will as the essence of all things: “[Natural] science in general, must ultimately reach a point at which its explanations come to an end: this is precisely the *metaphysical*, which physics only perceives as its boundary, beyond which it cannot extend, but within which it must remain, and then it relinquishes its object to metaphysics” (WN, 4). In a similar vein elsewhere, Schopenhauer states that wherever “the explanation of the physical comes to an end, it runs into something metaphysical, and wherever this is open to *immediate cognition* . . . will reveals itself” (WN, 28). The role of philosophy and religion, then, is to try to cognize some truths regarding the world beyond the realm of natural science. There will be philosophical questions that naturally occur to human beings that can be answered, but the natural scientist will never be able to answer them: it is to metaphysics, as practiced by the genuine philosopher, that we must look to in order to ultimately settle these issues.

As this project to understand something of the inexplicable, philosophy is “the search for truth . . . *par excellence*, . . . the highest, most important disclosures, lying closer to the heart of the human race than everything in the world” (WN, xv), and indeed, it is the closeness of philosophical insight and the inbuilt capabilities that we have to seek it that Schopenhauer wishes to emphasise in his conception of philosophical method. As a basis for genuine philosophical reflection, Schopenhauer also speaks of the need for “order to be brought to the mind” and to “learn to observe the world without prejudice” (WN, xxix). The basis for all genuine philosophical endeavours lies within the individual, with all the resources required for philosophical insight found there: as he states, the philosopher “must turn inwards . . . [for they] carry the ultimate and fundamental mystery within themselves, and it is immediately accessible to them; so it is only here that they can hope to find the solution



to the riddle of the world and to grasp the essence of all things by a single thread” (WWR2, 198). When faced with the inexplicable, human beings must look within themselves for the explanation of things that they are looking for, with a view to satisfying the need for metaphysics that plagues them. The use of ‘immediate cognition’ and an ordered mind that can reflect upon our experience objectively are the tools that are required for this project.

However, Schopenhauer emphasises that this does not imply that metaphysical reasoning should be understood as a largely *a priori* enterprise, in which we presuppose “that only what we know *prior* to all experience can reach farther than possible experience” (WWR2, 200). Rather, metaphysics must rely upon “*empirical* cognitive sources”:

[Does] it not seem precisely wrong that in order to solve the riddle of experience, i.e., the only world we have before us, we need to look away from it entirely, ignore its content and take and use as our material only the empty forms that we are conscious of a priori? Would it not be more to the point if the *science of experience in general* and as such were to be derived from experience as well? (WWR2, 200–201)

Metaphysical reflection focuses upon the contents and nature of our experience as a whole in order to better understand what might explain it, rather than attempting to rely purely upon knowledge available a priori. Such an enterprise includes examining both ‘outer experience’ of the world around us and the ‘inner experience’ of self-consciousness, with the aim to put “outer existence into connection with inner experience and [make] the latter the key to the former” (WWR2, 201).

Schopenhauer argues that his metaphysical system contains insights garnered from “observation of the real world,” which “gives it richness as well as wide roots in the soil of intuitive reality that is the source of all nourishment for abstract truths,” as opposed to other systems where “all the doctrines . . . are simply derived one from the other,” which turns out “meagre and impoverished,” as well as systems that claim to proceed on the basis of an “intellectual intuition . . . [which] must be discarded as subjective, individual, and consequently problematic” (WWR2, 206–7). If a philosophical system is based on experience in the manner Schopenhauer advocates, then it will have explanatory power in terms of being able to unify phenomena, it will give rise to legitimately conceived abstract truths, and will have objectivity and universality, on the assumption that the nature and content of experience is generally the same for all. We will explore the interplay of these objective and subjective standpoints in Schopenhauer’s philosophy in more detail in the next chapter.

Such an understanding of the subject matter and methods of metaphysical reflection has a number of consequences, which some philosophers may wish to reject. For one thing, Schopenhauer admits that his account of the origin of metaphysics takes from it the kind of certainty that is usually associated with a priori investigations, leaving an element of uncertainty with regard to metaphysical truths such that they will be subject to sceptical challenges (WWR2, 201). As Schopenhauer puts it, “[whatever] torch we might light and whatever space it might illuminate, our horizon will always remain bounded by deep night” (WWR2, 206). However, all is not lost, as there are marks of truth that could apply to a metaphysical system: If philosophy were able to offer us a stable body of judgements that can be relied upon, though still bearing in mind the limits under which the human intellect has to operate, this would be a good sign that we have grasped something of the fundamental truths of the world (WWR2, 202). Such a goal of immutability is more realistic in contrast to the constantly changing landscape of the natural sciences because metaphysics is concerned with the unchanging, universal character of experience as a whole. So, while we may have to admit an amount of uncertainty with regard to our metaphysical claims, we can nevertheless offer a condition of stability and immutability as a guide for metaphysical truth.

However, the question we are then left with is how metaphysics, as an enterprise that focuses upon experience, can satisfy our need for metaphysics, which seeks an explanation for that which lies beyond the world. Following Kant, Schopenhauer rejects the hope of having transcendent metaphysical knowledge on the basis of a secure deduction from reason. Any reasoning on that basis to that which is beyond experience will inevitably make use of some logical or conceptual laws, which only have legitimate application within the realms of our experience (WWR2, 206). Thus, for example, we cannot use the law of causality to infer from features of the world of our experience directly back to a transcendent cause, as we might attempt to do in the cosmological argument for the existence of God.

All is not lost, though, as Schopenhauer does believe that some form of cognizance can be had with regard to that which is beyond our experience. He argues that we can interpret our experience as pointing towards metaphysical truths, by offering signs that can be interpreted reasonably successfully:

The whole of experience is like a secret code; philosophy deciphers this code, and it proves its accuracy through the coherence that emerges everywhere out of this. If the whole of experience were only grasped deeply enough, and if inner experience were linked to outer, then it would have to be explicable, comprehensible from itself. (WWR2, 202–3)

We can therefore come to cognize something of what lies beyond experience through a process of decipherment or interpretation of our experience, which is possible only through a deep, generalised reflection upon both the world and ourselves, with a kind of confirmation arising from the ability of our interpretation to successfully explain connections between different sort of phenomena (in addition to the immutability condition described earlier):

Such a deciphering of the world with respect to what appears in it must be confirmed from itself by the harmony it brings to the profoundly heterogenous appearances of the world . . . [It will be] confirmed completely from itself. It must spread a uniform light over all the appearances of the world and bring even the most diverse into harmony, so that contradiction is resolved between even those appearances that conflict the most. This self-confirmation is the mark of its genuineness. (WWR2, 205)

A particular interpretation of the world, then, will be able to achieve some form of confirmation through its explanatory power with regard to unifying the different phenomena that we can discern through our experience: a “solution to a riddle proves itself to be correct by the fact that it fits with all ways of expressing the riddle, and my doctrine allows harmony and coherence to be seen in the conflicts and confusion of the appearances of this world, and solves the countless contradictions that are apparent when viewed from any other standpoint” (WWR2, 206). If a system of metaphysics is able to explain different kinds of phenomena in a powerful, unifying way, that is a good ground for supposing that this interpretation is offering a reliable general explanation for all things that form part of our experience. In this way, there is a sense in which the essence of things is epistemically accessible and thus open to cognition and confirmation, despite Kantian epistemic limits; nevertheless, Schopenhauer emphasises that this is limited to an interpretation or decipherment of our inner and outer experience.

However, the question we are then left with is why experience can be read in such a manner: in other words, why can experience be interpreted or deciphered such that we can come to cognize something of the essence of things, beyond the limits of scientific explanation? Schopenhauer answers this question by appealing to our status as individuals who nevertheless partake of the unified essence of all things: “Even if nobody is able to recognize the thing in itself through the shell of the forms of intuition [i.e. space, time and causality], it still remains the case that everyone carries the thing in itself within himself, and indeed is himself it; it must therefore be somehow accessible to him in self-consciousness” (WWR2, 203). Schopenhauer makes great use of the fact that *we ourselves* are manifestations of the thing in itself, and thus

something of the nature of the essence of things must be cognizable through focusing on both our outer and inner experience.

Schopenhauer credits Kant's distinction between phenomenon and thing in itself here as a philosophical breakthrough, because, as he argues, phenomena are to be understood as manifestations of the thing in itself (the 'other side of the same coin') and thus as carrying some of the character of that underlying principle: "the world, precisely as appearance, is the manifestation of what appears . . . [namely,] the thing in itself. The thing in itself must therefore express its essence and character from experience, and indeed from the material, not of the mere form of experience" (WWR2, 204). Through reading phenomena as manifestations of a unified principle underlying all things, Schopenhauer argues that metaphysics is able to go beyond appearance to "what is hidden within or behind it" (WWR2, 203). We cannot come to know the thing in itself as an 'ens extramundanum' ('otherworldly being'), but we can come to a form of limited cognizance of it insofar as it enters into the world of appearance.

Philosophers should accept that any cognition of the thing in itself will be relative to its appearance in phenomena and will not constitute direct cognition of the transcendent thing in itself. Due to this, any cognized thing in itself from metaphysical reflection is viewed immanently from our limited perspective: "it never breaks entirely free of experience, but rather remains nothing more than an interpretation and analysis of experience, in that it never speaks of the thing in itself other than in its relation to appearance" (WWR2, 203). Schopenhauer is clearly trying to achieve a difficult balance between his desire to both allow some element of cognition of the thing in itself and to maintain adherence to Kantian epistemic limits. While his metaphysical reflections do not go beyond experience in a manner that would betray his Kantian heritage, he does claim to be able to interpret experience such that some limited cognition of the thing in itself can be gained insofar as it enters into the world of phenomena. Whether Schopenhauer can legitimately achieve this is, of course, a matter that has vexed scholars for a long time, and will no doubt continue to do so in the future. Nevertheless, he believes that this approach allows metaphysical reflections to both observe Kantian epistemic limits and offer the kind of explanation of our experience that would satisfy the need for metaphysics. This key approach for metaphysics relies upon our intuition with regard to both inner and outer experience, which is a theme we will pick up later.

So, in this section, we have explicated the manner in which philosophy offers an explanation of things by going beyond the limits of scientific explanation. While the natural sciences are limited to that which is conditioned by the laws of nature, philosophical reflection is able to cognize something of

the essence of things through an interpretation or decipherment of the nature of our experience as a whole. We can think of philosophy as moving beyond the scientific endeavour by widening the scope of our reflections upon experience as far as it can go, in order to discern signs of that which is the essence of what is manifested in our experience. In doing so, it is able to directly meet our need for metaphysics. An important question we will need to consider with regard to Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, then, will regard how we are supposed to use our experience and intuition as epistemological sources to further metaphysical reflection, and that will be the focus of the next chapter.

## THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORLD

Before we move on to the question of the epistemological sources of philosophical reflection, I want to briefly return to an important aspect of the need for metaphysics that I have yet to thoroughly explore, namely, its ground in a negative judgement regarding the value and nature of life. The sense of the wrongness of things, such that it may have been better for us to have not existed, brings about the need for a specifically *moral* explanation of the world. In other words, due to the nature of the need for metaphysics, and the pessimistic insight that forms part of it, we do not simply seek for a metaphysical explanation of the world which would ultimately be quasi-physical: for example, something along the lines of 'our world has been caused by a metaphysical absolute principle.' Rather, we seek to understand the world as a whole from a moral perspective, such that we come to understand not only what the essence of the world is but also, interlinked with this, what might be the *moral significance* of the world as a whole.<sup>12</sup> In this way, Schopenhauer distinguishes between morality in a broad and narrow sense: the former pertaining to the moral significance of the world as a whole, the latter to the moral character of human beings and their actions (as he explains, *FW* and *BM* deal with morality in the narrow sense (see *WWR2*, 676), in contrast to the broader moral significance of the metaphysics of will).

Schopenhauer contrasts physical and moral explanations by stating that "moral investigations are incomparably more important than physical ones, indeed than all others, [following] from the fact they concern the thing in itself almost directly, that is, they concern the appearance in which, immediately touched by the light of cognition, the thing in itself reveals its essence as *will*" (ibid.). Schopenhauer's metaphysical theory is to be understood as a product of moral investigation, insofar as it focuses upon the will, a principle which manifests itself in an intrinsically wrong manner in the world as representation (in other words, it would have been better for the will not to

have been manifested in the world as representation, or for the will to have existed at all).

Taking morality in a broad sense, though, does not necessarily entail focusing upon the moral development and destiny of humankind as a whole, in that Schopenhauer argues that philosophers should focus upon the moral life of the individual, reflecting a general theme throughout his philosophy of focusing on the situation that each individual finds themselves in as manifestations of the will. The philosophical resources required for a metaphysical-moral investigation of the world can be found in a single individual alone (with each individual being a microcosm of the whole), and so any consideration of the masses in this regard is not required: for “the will to life, the essence in itself, appears whole and undivided in every individual, and the microcosm is the same as the macrocosm. The masses have no more content than can be found in each individual. Ethics is not about deeds and consequences, but about *willing*, and willing itself occurs only in the individual” (WWR2, 678). We are taking morality in the broad sense insofar as we are considering the moral significance of the world as a whole, but we should focus upon the individual in that each person themselves, as a willing being, is morally significant and partakes of the essence of the world.

However, Schopenhauer’s philosophy is a moral investigation not simply because it concerns the morally significant metaphysical principle of will, but also because, unlike physical explanations, it potentially offers consolation for the individual as a palliative for their painful need for metaphysics: “solace comes from the *moral* side alone, since here the depth of our own inner being come into consideration” (WWR2, 674). There is seemingly something about the metaphysics of will that not only offers some sort of metaphysical explanation for the way the world is, but also offers consolation for the way the world is. However, there is certainly no necessary connection between explaining something that strikes one as fundamentally wrong and gaining consolation for it, so why does Schopenhauer think that his metaphysics of will can console us? As Cartwright correctly states, “describing the world correctly and deriving consolation from a description of reality are two separate demands unless consolation simply follows from a correct description” (1988, 65). Schopenhauer seems to just assume that attaining the truth will inevitably bring about consolation too.

In response to this potential problem, we can say, for one thing, that it is certainly generally true that being given an explanation for something that has gone wrong can offer some consolation: for example, a grieving family may feel better knowing why their loved one died rather than not. In addition, we could claim that human beings, due to their intellectual abilities, naturally grasp the moral significance of the metaphysical truths they come to recognise. As already stated, as part of the intellectual abilities we have,

we are able to have a sense that things could have been otherwise, which enables us to not only recognise the wrongness of the world but to also reflect upon how we could potentially make things better for ourselves by exploring whatever paths to salvation might be available to us. So, putting it simply, Schopenhauer does seem to think that consolation would naturally follow from a correct description of the essence of reality, given our inbuilt ability to naturally grasp the moral implications of whatever truths we recognise. It is a near-universal truth of human beings that when they reflect upon the world, they will be led to the attempt to console themselves in the face of the pessimistic insights they come to.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has considered the source of philosophy in the need for metaphysics, which has raised various other topics, such as the relation between philosophy, religion and the natural sciences, as well as the role of philosophy as offering consolation and a moral explanation for all things. Philosophy is an attempt to find explanation and consolation in light of the dawning pessimistic realisation of the nature of the world around us. If a philosophical system is successful, it will be able to offer an interpretation and explanation of the world from the standpoint of experience and will thereby offer a form of consolation for the deleterious situation in which we find ourselves. Schopenhauer believes that his philosophy reflects the potential to find some consolation as individuals.

Moving on from considerations regarding the motivation of philosophy, in the following chapter we will go on to consider an aspect of Schopenhauer's philosophical method, namely, the adoption of the objective and subjective standpoints in the exposition of his system as potential epistemic sources for philosophical reflection. As mentioned earlier, despite the explanatory limits of natural science, Schopenhauer often uses empirical observation as support for his metaphysics of will, in addition to the perhaps more philosophically familiar subjective standpoint of the individual, where the focus is on garnering philosophical truths through introspection. I will argue that Schopenhauer's adoption of these two standpoints offer a further gateway into his conception of the nature of philosophy and may help clarify some of the interpretive puzzles that have been raised regarding his philosophical approach.

## NOTES

1. Though the production of works of art is potentially another human pursuit grounded in the need for metaphysics, I will not provide a discussion of Schopenhauer's aesthetics in this chapter, on the basis that we are considering here how the metaphysical need specifically gives rise to a desire for explanation. I consider the relation between art and philosophy in chapter 5 of this work.

2. It was a need that Schopenhauer felt as an innate vocation (WWR2, 646).

3. In *VC*, Schopenhauer speaks of his colour theory as “[showing] the actual significance of the data by explaining their connections” (*VC*, 4), and this holds more generally for his philosophy, in that the deep significance of the data from both ourselves and the world around us is to be ultimately explained through the shared principle of will.

4. Singh (2007, 115–6 and *passim*) argues that contemplation upon the certainty of death plays an essential part in Schopenhauer's conception of philosophical reflection, which is partly attributable to the influence of the *Upanishads* upon his thought.

5. Schopenhauer in fact seems to think that the bad does significantly outweigh the good in the world (and is potentially committed to thinking so, given his belief in the negative nature of satisfaction—the notion that pleasure is merely absence of pain, and not a positive feeling in itself [WWR2, 659]). He nevertheless assumes here that the existence of *any* bad in the world might make us prefer the non-existence of the world, in that the mere existence of “evil, ills, and death are what qualify and intensify philosophical astonishment: it is not merely that the world exists, but more, that it is so miserable” (WWR2, 190).

6. Cognition (*erkenntnis*) is one of the key terms in Schopenhauer's philosophical terminology and can be split into rational knowledge and intuitive cognition (see esp. WWR1, 63–66).

7. Schopenhauer paints a picture of an uneasy relationship between powerful religious institutions and adherents of philosophical systems, with the former showing tolerance merely because of the small number of those for whom genuine philosophical insight is available (WWR2, 182). However, he does claim that religion always seeks to suppress the development of metaphysics (WWR, 207). An aspect of the potential conflict between religion and philosophy stems from the fact that religion, in order to maintain its power and influence upon the individual, cannot admit its allegorical nature, and thus claims truth ‘in the strict and proper sense,’ leading it to come into conflict with philosophical systems that do claim truth in that sense (see WWR2, 184).

8. As we shall see in chapter 3, due to the limits of communication, individuals will need to come to philosophical insight themselves, although they can be inspired to such insights by external factors, such as being introduced to particular philosophical texts. As a result, one will never be able to indoctrinate a child into a particular philosophical system.

9. Due to making immediate claims to truth, philosophical systems can be subject to scrutiny in a way that religions, which require faith and rely upon external authority, cannot. As a result, Schopenhauer states that it makes sense to ask for proofs of



philosophical systems of thought, but not for religious belief-systems. In this way, he negates any need for what is traditionally recognised as ‘philosophy of religion,’ such as the traditional arguments for the existence of God (see WWR2, 182–85). Indeed, any attempt at rationalising religion mistakenly assumes that religious belief systems can be true ‘in the strict and proper sense,’ whereas they can only be true allegorically, leading philosophers of religion to often strip away certain elements of dogma, leaving mere optimism behind in place of genuine religious belief (WWR2, 184).

10. Schopenhauer places great value on the myth of the transmigration of souls with regard to transmitting a deep philosophical truth to the masses: “There has never been and will never be a myth that is bound up so strongly with a philosophical truth accessible to so few as this ancient doctrine of the nobles and oldest of peoples” (WWR1, 421).

11. Schopenhauer also triumphantly proclaims that “Egyptians, Pythagoreans, and Empedocles share with Hindus and Buddhists the view that the body is a prison and life a state of suffering and purification, from which death redeems us when we escape the transmigration of souls. With the exception of metempsychosis it is also part of Christianity” (PP1, 40). Due to the possibility of capturing metaphysical truths in some sense in the mythology of the masses, it is important for Schopenhauer to note the ‘agreement of the peoples’ across civilizations and eras with regard to fundamental claims of his philosophy, particularly the ideality of space and time, pessimism, and the identification of the thing in itself with will.

12. Schopenhauer sees theism as an attempt to offer such a moral explanation of things, by placing a moral order at the basis of the physical order. However, such an explanation could not satisfy a mature humankind: for example, Schopenhauer argues that the problem of evil will ultimately stand in the way of a rationally acceptable theism (WWR2, 678).

## Nature and Subjectivity

In the previous chapter, we explored Schopenhauer's account of why human beings engage with philosophy. We shall now go on to consider, in broad terms, some of his views concerning the proper working-methods and sources of philosophical reflection. Specifically, one of the aspects of Schopenhauer's philosophical approach that can appear quite puzzling is his use of both objective and subjective standpoints: that is, his consideration of philosophical issues from, on the one hand, the perspective of our observation of things within our experience of the natural world, and on the other, from reflection upon the nature of our experience at a more abstract level. In this chapter, I explore the interplay of these subjective and objective standpoints in Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, and I argue that his use of these different perspectives is compatible, though the primacy of the subjective approach is affirmed. In this way, I wish to challenge the possible impression that Schopenhauer pursues a confused or simply incoherent approach in the way in which he uses observations from the natural world to inform his metaphysics of will.

### THE PRIMACY OF THE SUBJECTIVE STANDPOINT

The notion of standpoints is used by Schopenhauer to illustrate the manner in which all philosophers rely upon foundational assumptions that guide their reflections: indeed, “[in] philosophy every *method* that is allegedly *without assumption* is hot air, since something must always be regarded as given in order to proceed from it” (PP2, 35). Schopenhauer argues that a philosopher has to start somewhere with their reflections, with something that is

taken as given for the moment, [which] must subsequently be compensated and justified . . . [either] something subjective, such as perhaps self-consciousness, representation, the subject, the will; or something *objective*, such as that which

manifests itself in the consciousness of other things, perhaps the real world, external objects, nature, material, atoms, even a god, even a merely concocted concept. (ibid.)

Before philosophical reflection can even begin, the philosopher needs to decide upon a particular starting point as an assumed foundation, without any ground or justification for that decision. Such an inquiry will have its foundation in some aspect of subjectivity (in which case the philosopher in question will be taking a subjective standpoint) or of our experience of the world (thus taking an objective standpoint).

The distinction between the subjective and objective standpoints can be found in Schopenhauer's early notes: in 1814, he writes that "[we] *can proceed objectively as well as subjectively*, in other words start from the *object* as well as from the *subject*" (MR1, 132–33). However, Schopenhauer clearly gives the advantage to the subjective standpoint in terms of philosophical reflection, in that if we begin from the objective standpoint, "we then assume as conceded all the forms of the understanding and of sensibility, but cannot dwell or enlarge on them, for they are the permanent *hypothesis* to all the subsequent *theses*. If, on the other hand, we start from the subject, nothing is left out of consideration" (MR1, 133). Schopenhauer thus shows his early allegiance to the Kantian approach, in which we begin our philosophical investigations by focusing on the functions of the intellect, and not simply taking them for granted, as we would be doing if we immediately turned our attention to the world as it appears to us. If we conduct theoretical philosophy without first undertaking a survey of our intellect (in the manner of a Kantian critique), we are liable to fall into error and speculation. By understanding the necessary forms of our intellect first, we are beginning in the right manner with the ground of our experience, and so the objective standpoint should not be the starting point for philosophy.

Also in line with his Kantian commitments, Schopenhauer argues that using the objective standpoint alone is a mistake due to not recognising the ideality of the phenomenal realm:

[If] we proceed objectively, we regard time, space and all the categories as independent of the subject and as positively given. This then is the necessary point of view which naturally appears but is really artificial, precarious and hypothetical. We now proceed on the guiding line of causality from the effect to the cause and look for the chain of the states of matter of which the organism . . . is the last link. (ibid.)

As Schopenhauer claims here, the objective standpoint erroneously takes the necessary features of our experience as features of the world as it is in itself,

which is an error that Kant dispels once and for all in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. As Vasalou notes, any outward-facing investigation will “[remain] captive to the forms of knowledge that condition [our] representations—namely time, space, causality, and the fact of being object for a subject—and could not go beyond them” (2013, 12), and so Schopenhauer could not be satisfied with merely the objective standpoint alone.

Though both the subjective and objective standpoints have limits to their explanatory power (after all, the subjective standpoint cannot come to know the knowing self),<sup>1</sup> nevertheless the subjective standpoint is to be preferred due to its more comprehensive sphere of explanation in focusing upon the fundamental nature of our experience, as well as that which makes up our experience, i.e., things as they appear to us. Given that our intellect fundamentally shapes the world of our experience, we cannot understand that world in any philosophical sense without first considering its ground in our rational and sensible faculties. In addition, given the limits of explanation from an empirical perspective, there seems to be little prospect for philosophical insights being garnered from the objective standpoint. However, despite all this, Schopenhauer still makes great use of the objective standpoint in the exposition of his philosophy, as part of a project to find corroboration for his metaphysics.

Part of the need to take the objective standpoint, despite the primacy of the subjective standpoint, is to offset the somewhat rather arbitrary metaphysical decision of which standpoint to take. If the philosopher shifts their starting point elsewhere and begins their reflections anew, they are able both to avoid a potentially one-sided view upon things and potentially offer corroboration for their conclusions from a different standpoint: “in order to reconcile the arbitrariness committed here and to rectify the assumptions, one must subsequently change the *standpoint* and switch over to the opposite one, from which one now deduces what was originally taken as given in a supplemental philosophical argument. ‘Thus one thing sheds light on another’” (PP2, 35). Schopenhauer’s recommendation is to switch from a subjective starting point to an objective one, or vice versa, and then proceed from the new starting point to the old one. If such a movement can achieve complementary results, then you will have some justification for your original starting point and thereby the reflections that were carried out on that basis. In this way, opposing standpoints can mutually reinforce each other, offering philosophical insight with at least some degree of justification.

In the same passage, Schopenhauer reveals that this use of mutually reinforcing standpoints is the method that he employs in the construction of his philosophical system. Though starting from the subjective viewpoint gives a degree of certainty, it is not able to offer a fully comprehensive epistemic

ground for our philosophical reflections: “due to the actual *immediacy* of the subjective, one will nevertheless obtain a partly one-sided, partly not quite justified philosophy” (PP2, 36). Therefore, Schopenhauer’s reflections, particularly in his earlier first volume of *WWR*, which were largely from the subjective standpoint, had value on their own but were lacking in crucial justification: after all, the ‘certainty’ of the subjective standpoint could be merely apparent and ultimately misleading. Further problems for the subjective standpoint are raised by our inability to cognize the self and worries concerning various sceptical scenarios, alongside the realisation that the intellect is not a simply neutral faculty, in that it “is fundamentally intended for the apprehension of mere relations, as these suffice for the service of an individual will, and for precisely this reason it is essentially *outwardly* directed” (PP2, 38), and therefore not necessarily a good tool for philosophical reflection upon that which goes beyond the world of our experience.

In addition, the philosopher proceeding from the objective standpoint alone eventually comes to the realisation that any beliefs based on this standpoint relies upon “the credit of the human intellect, which must after all have its own forms, functions and manner of presentation, and consequently [are] entirely conditioned by it” (ibid.). They are eventually reminded that they are viewing the world from an individual, human perspective, which will ultimately have an impact upon their supposedly objective, reliable apprehension of the world around them. Schopenhauer argues that there are “two essential, necessary and inseparable halves to the world as representation” (WWR1, 6), namely, the object and the subject, and thus the widest possible reflection upon representation will take both the object and the subject into account. At the point at which they realise the limited nature of the purely objective standpoint, the philosopher will have to switch to the subjective standpoint, “thereby making the intellect itself the focus of investigation and putting its authority to the test” (PP2, 38). Therefore, whether you choose the objective or subjective standpoint as the beginning of your philosophical reflections, you will eventually be compelled to adopt the other standpoint in order to settle upon justified metaphysical cognition.

Given the need to thereby use both the objective and subjective standpoints in philosophy, Schopenhauer supplements his philosophy “by in turn taking as the point of departure what is deduced in it as given and hence, from the opposite standpoint, deduces the subjective from the objective, as previously the objective from the subjective” (PP2, 36). Therefore, we can expect to find his philosophical claims justified by appeals to both the objective and subjective standpoints, hoping to find agreement between them, with each one able to deduce the fundamental starting point of the other. In Schopenhauer’s philosophy, we indeed find the will being used as a starting point to explain

the nature of our experience of the external world (the subjective-to-objective direction), and facts regarding nature being used to induce the will as essence of the world (the objective-to-subjective direction). In such a way, he hopes to be able to avoid the lack of justification and one-sided nature of the systems of past philosophers, as well as arriving at significant metaphysical truths by approaching nature as an appearance which nevertheless can act as a “hieroglyph” (PP2, 39) for the essence of the world. Thus, Schopenhauer’s use of the objective standpoint follows the path, mentioned in the previous chapter, of deciphering something of the essence of the world from its appearance to us.

Schopenhauer’s approach here reflects his desire to use as wide a factual basis as possible in support of his philosophy, for “when not thoroughly supported and grounded by facts, theory is nothing but a vain and empty phantom” (VC, 2), and thus by combining evidence from both the subjective and objective standpoints, and showing that there is a natural agreement and harmony found between his philosophical findings and those of natural science, he hopes he can achieve a unified system of thought, as well as a persuasive presentation of it, across all of his works: the “microcosm [of the individual] and macrocosm [of nature] illuminate each other mutually, whereby they result in essentially the same thing” (PP2, 20). He boasts, “my system does not, like all previous ones, float in the air high above all reality and experience, but descends to this firm ground of actuality” (WN, 2), whereas all previous philosophies “leave a wide gap between their results and experience, and are very far from reaching down immediately and touching it” (WN, 1). Schopenhauer argues that we should be impressed that the results of natural science, “which avoid all metaphysics as much as possible” (WN, 3), nevertheless accord with his metaphysical claims. Through his use of both the objective and standpoints, therefore, Schopenhauer hopes to overcome the gaps left by other philosophers in accounting for all parts of our experience, both of ourselves and the world around us, by drawing upon as wide a basis of data as possible to establish his metaphysics of will.

## THE USE OF THE OBJECTIVE STANDPOINT

While Schopenhauer’s early writings focus on the initial Kantian project of approaching philosophy from the subjective standpoint, he realises that the use of this standpoint alone is not sufficient to provide a fully justified philosophical system. We therefore find Schopenhauer turning increasingly to the use of the objective standpoint in his later works.

The examination of nature in order to greater understand the human predicament (which, as we saw in the previous chapter, gives rise to the

metaphysical need that lies at the heart of the philosophical enterprise) is part of a wider project on the part of Schopenhauer, particularly in his later works, to come to a ‘corroboration’ of his metaphysics of will from a ‘realistic,’ or ‘objective’ standpoint. This approach “[proceeds] from the objective world as a given” (WN, 73), in contrast to the Kantian ‘subjective’ standpoint, which begins with the constitution of the intellect as a philosophical starting point, “[considering] consciousness as a given” (WN, 72). Using the objective standpoint, we can consider our experience of the external world and use various empirical observations as evidence for the metaphysical insights previously established from the subjective standpoint in *FR* and *WWR1*. Schopenhauer characterises this task as gathering “nature’s evidence for the truth of my theory” (WN, 35).

The objective standpoint can be used as part of the confirmation of a given metaphysical system on the basis of its explanatory power with regard to the different kinds of phenomena in our experience. If a proposed interpretation or decipherment of the world is able to persuasively explain the interconnections between different kinds of phenomena, including both from inner and outer experience, this will give good epistemic grounds for being convinced of this metaphysical system. In such a way, we can see a corroboration between objective and subjective standpoints, in that they are both found to be pointing in the same direction towards a proposed understanding of the essence of things as it appears in the phenomenal realm.

As an example of this method in action, one of Schopenhauer’s most important philosophical claims is to be found in his argument for the identification of the essence of the world with will. He notes that of all the physical objects that appear to us, our own body seems to have a special status. From the objective standpoint, our body appears to us as “a representation like any other, an object among objects,” and to this extent alone, we are “familiar with its movements and its action in the same way [we are] familiar with the alterations that take place in other objects of intuition” (WWR1, 118–19). However, this objective experience of the body as an object which undergoes alterations like any other is not the whole story as far as we are concerned, because we are also aware of an experience of willing connected with the movements of that particular object. While we have a certain experience of the body from a purely objective experience, from a different standpoint, it is “given in an entirely different way, namely as something immediately familiar to everyone, something designated by the word *will*. Every true act of [our] will is immediately and inevitably a movement of his body as well: he cannot truly will an act without simultaneously perceiving it as a motion of the body” (WWR1, 119). By comparing our experience from the subjective and objective standpoints in this manner, we are able to come to a realisation of some significance attached to our physical body: On the one hand, it

appears as one physical object among others, while on the other, we can see its alterations as indelibly correlated to acts of will, to the extent that we may conclude that “they are one and the same thing, only given in two entirely different ways” (ibid.), a realisation which acts as a motivation for the later argument concerning the identification of the essence of things with will.

Vasalou has examined Schopenhauer’s use of the objective standpoint in this argument: she states that our experience of our own body acts as a basis for a thought experiment, in which we approach our body from “the vantage point of an observer whose only access to the world was that of having it as object of representation (as object for subject)” (2013, 13), and particularly consider how our conscious actions would appear to such a person. After considering our own body from such an unnatural perspective, we then reconsider our normal experience of our acts of will issuing in conscious actions by the physical body. In the light of such a comparison, the strangeness of our actions appears to us in a manner we had not considered before, to the extent that it “[makes] the perceived connection between motives and action appear occult, and thus makes us feel the need for a mode of access to ourselves that would go beyond the phenomenon” (Vasalou 2013, 14). By bringing us to reflect upon the different experiences that we have of the actions of others and of our own deeds, Schopenhauer brings to our attention the unique form of non-representational awareness that we have with regard to our own acts of will. Such an awareness acts as a starting point for garnering more substantive metaphysical results.

With regard to our interest here in Schopenhauer’s distinction between the objective and subjective standpoints, while it is the case that the objective standpoint is doing some work here, it is nevertheless clearly of secondary importance, insofar as the subjective viewpoint is pointing out what is lacking in the objective standpoint, rather than the objective standpoint itself offering us the potential for metaphysical insight (and it is certainly not a case of the objective standpoint corroborating the metaphysics of will). As such, we have to look elsewhere for a more positive use of the objective standpoint in Schopenhauer’s exposition of his own system.

We find the objective standpoint used in such a way throughout *WN*, and so by focusing on this text, we can better understand the metaphilosophy underlying Schopenhauer’s adoption of the objective standpoint. The possibility of exploring the objective standpoint philosophically is the prime focus of *WN*.<sup>2</sup> Schopenhauer states that the use of the objective standpoint in this work is primarily geared to reveal the connection between the inner nature of things in our experience with that which we experience in ourselves as will (see GB, 200). The use of the objective standpoint is clearly intended to add to the persuasive power of the presentation of the metaphysics of will by helping to convince us of the key metaphysical claim of the identity of the thing in itself



with will and recognise the ‘force of truth’ underlying that claim. How do considerations from the objective standpoint, though, add to Schopenhauer’s presentation of his philosophy, following on from earlier arguments that focus upon the facts of self-consciousness? In other words, how does the adoption of the objective standpoint aid us in corroborating philosophical insights gained from the subjective standpoint? It may seem, given the limits to natural science that we have already discussed, that we could not potentially learn anything for philosophy, which attempts to cognize something of the essence of the world beyond phenomenal appearance, from viewing the world merely objectively.

The situation with regard to what natural science can achieve is not as straightforward as it may seem at first glance, however, in that some

Clearly sighted and observant investigators in the realm of the natural sciences [can] succeed at casting a stolen glance beyond the curtain that, as it were, fixes the limits of their science, not just sensing the boundary as such, but also in a way perceiving its constitution, and in a way even peering into the realm of metaphysics that lies on the other side of the curtain. (WN, 4)

This rather surprising passage seems to suggest that some of the lessons of natural science can indeed have metaphysical implications, to the extent that something can be cognized of what formally lies beyond the usual scope of natural science. Schopenhauer speaks of natural science being able to “[describe] the boundary [between the realms of natural science and metaphysics] precisely and explicitly as that which a metaphysical system . . . has asserted as the true inner essence or principle of all things,” at which point “the different kinds of investigators on both sides [i.e. the philosopher and the natural scientist] must truly feel like miners who build two tunnels from two widely distant points to meet one another in the bowels of the earth” (WN, 4–5).

It appears that by being able to map out the boundary of natural science in a comprehensive and exact way, the natural scientist can potentially offer evidence in favour of a particular metaphysics. If the natural scientist, at this point, finds agreement with a metaphysician, then the metaphysics in question will have more to be said in its favour than if one just took philosophical reflection into account: “[The] philosophical system that experiences this triumph thereby receives such a strong and sufficient external proof of its truth and accuracy, that no greater proof is possible” (WN, 5). As we shall see, Schopenhauer believes that the findings of natural science at the most fundamental levels of nature can offer evidence for his core metaphysical thesis of the identification of the essence of the world as will. To offer a more detailed view of Schopenhauer’s use of the objective standpoint in action, I will focus

in the following section on his account of humanity as standing at the pinnacle of nature. While we can note the interconnection between humans and the rest of nature, in that aspects of human life can be seen to have analogues at all the various stages in the natural hierarchy, we nevertheless have a special status in nature due to our enhanced intellect. Schopenhauer argues that reflection on both what makes us part of nature and what makes us stand apart offers key insights into the essence of the world and how we might find consolation for our difficult existence within it.

## REFLECTIONS ON NATURE

In *WN*, Schopenhauer argues that, in addition to helping to show that the will can be seen in all things, the objective standpoint can deepen our understanding of ourselves as cognizing beings with an intellect outstripping all others in nature. From the objective standpoint, we are able to conceive ourselves as cognizing beings that stand at the pinnacle of nature:

I cite these [empirical] observations in order to indicate the sphere to which *cognition* belongs when it is considered, not as is usual, from within, but when it is considered realistically from a standpoint lying external to itself as something foreign, thus gaining for it the objective point of view that is of greatest importance for supplementing the subjective. (*WN*, 70–71)

Not only can we come to a better understanding of ourselves as *willing* beings through empirical observation, we can achieve this with regard to our status as *cognizing* beings in the same way. Through these reflections on ourselves as cognizing beings, we come to a deeper understanding of what both unifies us with the rest of nature and what sets us apart as the kind of wondering, philosophical beings that we find ourselves to be.

When we consider our cognition from this objective view, Schopenhauer states that it “presents itself as the *medium of motives*, i.e., as the medium of causality, and thus as what receives the external alteration from which internal alteration must follow, that is, as intermediary between the two” (*WN*, 71). We are able to observe human beings, both ourselves and others, placed into various situations by the concatenation of circumstances in the phenomenal world, and reacting apparently intelligently to these situations in various ways. From a physiological perspective, we can observe signals from the senses being transmitted to the physical brain, with others being sent back, issuing in certain kinds of behaviour, and more abstractly, we can understand human beings (regardless of the particular details of their physiology) as reacting, sometimes circumspectly when the intellect is playing a greater role,

sometimes more instinctively, to the environment around them, in similar ways to which other animals and plants react to theirs. Indeed, Schopenhauer wishes to extend the analogy all the way to inorganic nature: “As the medium of motives, what cognition does for animals and humans, receptivity for stimuli does for plants, and receptivity for all sorts of causes does for inorganic bodies; put precisely, all these are simply differences of degree” (ibid.). Though there are distinctions to be made with regard to cognition between the different levels of nature, nevertheless we are bound together by all sharing either cognition or an analogue of cognition.

By thinking through the hierarchy of nature, seeing what unifies as well as differentiates us, we are able to understand the philosophical significance of our intellectual capacities.<sup>3</sup> After reflecting on the rest of nature we see that “[it] is in human beings that motive and actions, representations and will, first appear completely distinct from one another” (WN, 75). When we reflect upon events at the inorganic level, though we see that external influences have brought them about, nevertheless “there exists absolutely no trace of consciousness of the external world” (WN, 76), insofar as events follow immediately upon each other in an apparently direct manner which is open for precise prediction based on past observation. When we consider such events, they are more intelligible to us than those in which a being of organic nature participates, and as such the processes by which these events take place are more readily understood: “[The] intelligibility of natural phenomena decreases in proportion as will manifests itself more and more distinctly in them, i.e., as they stand higher and higher on the scale of being” (WN, 86).

There is an unpredictability to the way organic beings will react to a given situation, whereas purely inorganic material is more reliable and measurable. The relative intelligibility of inorganic nature depends on the closeness of cause and effect, in terms of its relative homogeneity and proportionality. Schopenhauer writes, “an *inorganic body* is one for which all movements occur from some external cause which is equal to the effect in degree, so that the effect can be measured and calculated from the cause, and the effect produces a completely equal counter-effect in the cause” (VC, 18). Such chains of events are relatively intelligible to us, though such intelligibility declines as we move to consider processes higher up the hierarchy of nature (though thankfully for us, a glimmer of insight is available with regard to those beings who stand at the pinnacle of nature—human beings).

Even when we are still regarding events at the inorganic level, we can see a decline in the intelligibility of causal connections as we move up the scale of appearances, for example, when mysterious forces such as electricity and gravity come into play, “[only] the *laws* of the mode of effect can still be observed . . . [in that] cause and effect are completely heterogeneous, their connection unintelligible, and the bodies show great receptivity for a causal

influence, the essence of which remains for us a secret” (WN, 88). Further, we see that the quantitative balance between cause and effect is not always necessarily held to, such that “more seems to lie in the effect and less in the cause” (*Ibid.*).

Such unintelligibility in causal connections between events becomes even greater, first, as we consider the influence of stimuli upon plants, followed by the influence of motives upon animals. The connections involved between cause and effect become increasingly less intelligible as we ascend up the hierarchy of nature, with the observable proportionality and homogeneity progressively decreasing, to the point where the cause of a particular action by a human being can become so mysterious that we may be tempted to believe that the action was *causa sui*, a conjecture which Schopenhauer emphatically denies (see WN, 90).

Though there is an obvious distinction between inorganic and organic nature (as Schopenhauer argues, “in all of nature no boundary is so sharply drawn as that between the organic and inorganic” [WN, 83]), we also have a sense that the divide is not as great as it might seem at first glance: we should be very careful to not construe organic nature as “a [mere] chance play of chemical forces” (WN, x). In a way similar to which he postulates a universal sense of the fundamental wrongness of the world, Schopenhauer seems also to think that we have a shared notion that an analogue of willing, as we experience it in ourselves, is taking place when the operation of the laws of nature bring about events given certain causes at the level of inorganic nature. He instructs us to,

carefully observe how powerfully a stream falls over rock masses, and ask yourself whether such decided striving, such raging, can go on without effort and whether such an effort can be thought of without will. And in just the same way whenever we become aware of something originally moved by an immediate, primary force, we are compelled to think of its inner essence as will. (WN, 83)

Though it could of course be a mere shared tendency of thought to falsely attribute will to inanimate objects and processes, Schopenhauer thinks that such a tendency reveals a shared insight into the essence of the world, that there is ultimately something unitary lying behind both organic and inorganic nature that binds them together, despite the obvious differences. Even scientists wholeheartedly committed to empiricism, Schopenhauer claims, cannot stop themselves from using will-language when describing certain physical events, given their underlying insight, not consciously acknowledged, that they “[can] only see *will* on the other side of the [metaphysical] boundary” (*ibid.*).

Recognising the analogue of will that operates at the level of inorganic nature allows us to move beyond the widely held distinction between events brought about by will and those brought about by physical causation: “The usual view of nature assumes that there are *two* fundamentally different principles of movement, that movement of a body could have *two types of origin*, namely that it either proceeds internally, when it is attributed to *will*, or externally, in which case it arises through *causes*” (WN, 84). As long as this sharp distinction between willing and causing is assumed, then we will continue to see some events in the organic world, those issuing from willing, as fundamentally separated from events occurring inorganically, and thus as demonstrating the division between organic and inorganic nature. As a result, we will be unable to acknowledge the fundamental insight available to us that there is something that unifies all of nature, and we will be thereby left in a position where we are unable to come to some understanding of the essence of nature as a whole.

In contrast with the commonly-held view of a strict ontological distinction between willing and causation, Schopenhauer argues that, “there is only a single, uniform, universal principle of all movement, one without exception: its internal condition is *will*; its external occasion is *cause*, which, depending on the nature of what is moved, can occur in the form of a stimulus or a motive” (WN, 85–6). We are thoroughly acquainted with the process by which an animal is presented with a motive for action, or a plant with a stimulus, as a *cause*, from which results a movement based upon an act of will. Schopenhauer’s claim is that we understand the unity and essence of nature better when we recognise that an analogue of that very process is taking place in a chain of events connected by causation at the level of inorganic nature. In both cases, there is willing taking place, except that one appears to fall more easily under the schema of causality. So, Schopenhauer concludes, “no reason remains to accept two completely different sources of movement; moreover, principles are not to be multiplied beyond necessity” (WN, 25), recalling Ockham’s razor. The course of nature is suffused by willing, despite the apparent strict distinction between acts of will and causation.

In considering plants, we see a “mere analogue of consciousness” that can “be thought of as an obscure self-enjoyment,” in the way they tend to grow towards the light, as well as having a “feeble analogue of perception” (WN, 85) in response to stimuli, based upon the particular needs and character of the species involved. When we shift our attention to animals, we see the trend continued, in that, as we consider more complex beings, with greater needs and intellect, the conceptual and causal distance between external influence and behaviour itself becomes greater, except now the external influences are construed as motives, rather than stimuli. Schopenhauer argues that “the actual distinguishing *character of being an animal is cognition*” (VC, 17)

which allows for a truly spontaneous action: “The most striking [distinguishing feature of animals and plants] is still spontaneous motion . . . [for] a truly spontaneous movement, not following from mechanical, chemical, or physiological causes, occurs only upon a cognized object which becomes the motive of the movement” (VC, 18). Due to their representational aspect, an object acting as a motive “need only be perceived, regardless of at what length, how distantly, how clearly,” whereas stimuli “always require contact . . . [and always] a certain duration and intensity of influence” (VC, 18–19). The animal is able, therefore, to take into account their environment in a much wider way than the plant in how they behave. Such a capacity clearly distinguishes animals from plants and shows the former to be higher up the hierarchy of nature.

With a more enhanced intellect dealing with more complex data (their ‘world as representation’ becomes wider, in a sense), the gap between motive and act of will becomes ever more distant. In particular, the animal is no longer merely reacting to the present moment, and can become more circumspect, taking into account the past and future in progressively greater ways, and even becoming disinterested to that which is taking place around them:

“Among the most intelligent and trained animals there appears the first feeble trace of a disinterested apprehension of their environment: dogs convey this by staring; they can be seen in the window attentively gazing at everything going on before them; sometimes apes look around as if they were trying to make sense of their environment.” (WN, 75)

Having undertaken these observations of the various levels of nature, and the way in which there is a genuine sense of both unity and progression as we move from inorganic to organic nature, we can now come to consider humanity, its place in nature, and the significance of its need for metaphysics, anew. Our need for metaphysics emerges as a unique ability, stemming from our position in the hierarchy of nature, and growing out of the increasing separation between motive and will as we approach the pinnacle of natural beings. We see that we form part of the pattern of increasing complexity, unified with all other things, and yet standing at the pinnacle of nature itself, for “[it] is in human beings that motive and actions, representations and will, first appear completely distinct from one another” (ibid.). While we are like all other animals, in that our intellect and sense-capacities are seemingly formed in relation to the needs of the will, nevertheless there is something special about us, stemming from the distance that has come about in human beings between motive and act of will, due to the unique power of our intellect (Schopenhauer states that, “the great difference between humans and animals consists only in degrees of perfection of intellect” [WN, 29]).

Due to this, the question of the intelligibility of the connection between cause and effect that we considered earlier is not as straightforward as we originally supposed. We saw that the relative intelligibility of causal connections at the level of inorganic nature, due to the homogeneity and proportionality between cause and effect, is reduced at the level of organic nature, decreasing to the extreme case of the human being, where the link between cause and effect may be so tenuous, delayed and disproportionate that we may not be able to make any sense of the connection, to the extent that we might be misled into thinking that the action involved is *causa sui*.

However, human beings need not remain such a mystery, because we are one ourselves, and thus, the pattern of increased unintelligibility can be broken once our reflections turn to the pinnacle of nature. As Schopenhauer puts it:

[After] the outwardly directed light of understanding, with its form of causality, has more and more been overcome by darkness until it ultimately casts only a weak and uncertain glimmer, just then, an enlightenment of a completely different sort, from a completely different side, out of our own inner being, comes to meet it through the fortuitous circumstance that we, the ones judging, are ourselves the object to be judged. (WN, 90)

Given the fact that we have introspective knowledge available in virtue of simply being conscious human beings, even scientists can come to recognise that willing ultimately lies at the basis of all things. Schopenhauer states that they never could have achieved such a result through “their experimental research and hypotheses,” rather,

The solution to the riddle is whispered to them from outside their research, through the fortunate circumstance that in this case the researcher is at the same time himself the object of the research, and so experiences the secret of the inner process . . . otherwise his explanation, just like the explanation for any other phenomenon, must come to a stop before an inscrutable power. (WN, 27–28)

Though the causal connection between motive and action became very difficult to discern at the level of animals, we are not ultimately left in the dark as to the kind of process involved, as we experience the very process in ourselves as an act of will, or as Schopenhauer states, that “will is the agent in every action” (WN, 90). From such reflection on ourselves, we can ultimately recognise that there is a process that follows the scheme of causation going on, and that it is what we experience in ourselves as willing.

Having gone this far, we can go even further by applying our notion of willing to the rest of nature. Though, when considering processes in nature, we were always left with a ‘mysterious x,’ which, when we went further up the hierarchy of nature, “extended itself farther and farther . . . [until] on the

highest levels, [it had] completely repressed the causal explanation,” we are nevertheless able to see at the level of human beings, “when causal explanation could achieve very little, [that] this *x* reveals itself as *will*” (WN, 91). Our reflections allow us to see both what unifies us with nature (a shared essence, identified as will), as well as what differentiates us (the possible distance between motive and act of will, given our intellectual capabilities) as the very pinnacle of it. As such, we come to understand better than before our connection with the rest of nature, and yet what allows us to stand back in a disinterested manner and view it from a different perspective, which ultimately plays a major role in the beginnings of our philosophical reflection upon the world. We begin to see ourselves as having a potentially unique destiny amongst all natural beings, as those who have achieved a substantial distance between intellect and the will that permeates all things.

Within the human species itself, however, there is still some variation in the circumspect disinterestedness, the distance from the present moment and the immediate needs of the will, that characterises the very great human beings, those rare geniuses for whom the deep insights of art and philosophy are accessible:

Common people quite distinctly apprehend only the things that have some sort of direct or indirect reference to themselves (interest to them); the dullness of their intellects for everything else cannot be overcome; therefore it remains in the background, never coming to consciousness with full, radiant distinctness. For them, *philosophical astonishment* and *artistic inspiration* remain forever foreign, whatever else they might do; to them everything seems fundamentally self-evident. Complete detachment and separation of intellect from will and from its service is the privilege of genius . . . Genius is objectivity. (WN, 75)

Even among average minds, objective perception of external things always has a considerably subjective tinge: cognition still altogether bears the character that exists merely for the assistance of willing. The more eminent the mind is, the more it loses this, the object releases itself more and more from the subject, and so the more the external world presents itself as purely objective, until ultimately, in the genius, it reaches complete objectivity . . . [Since] intuition is the basis of all cognition, all thinking and all insight can be traced to the fundamental distinction in the quality of it, from which arises the complete difference between the common mind’s and the eminent mind’s entire method of apprehension. (WN, 77)

Through a greater distance between will and intellect, greater minds are able to view the world more objectively and distance themselves from it in a manner unavailable to all other beings.

From considering the hierarchy of nature, we can therefore gain a further insight into the nature of the need for metaphysics, the ‘philosophical



astonishment' that acts as the motivation behind the philosophical endeavours accessible to and undertaken by some, the 'highest,' human beings. The foundations of the capacity for philosophy lie in our very position at the pinnacle of nature. Human beings, as the most complex beings in nature, have the most complex needs, and thus the most highly developed intellectual and perceptual capacities, in line with the pattern seen throughout both organic and inorganic nature. As animals, we have an intellect and the consciousness of a world that is presented to us, and as the very highest beings in the hierarchy, there is the greatest distance between external influence and act of will, stemming from the relative independence from the will granted to the intellect in virtue of its power. Indeed, as geniuses have a preponderance of intellectual capability and sensibility, which is "the principal characteristic of humans and is that which is human in humans" (WN, 31), their position is confirmed as being at the very pinnacle of nature, beyond all other human beings: they are "*human* to a higher degree" (WN, 32).

As we have seen, one of the aspects of human beings that has a particularly important role to play in philosophical reflection is their capacity for reason, and it is this that particularly marks them out from the rest of the animals, who merely have intuition and the understanding (whose role is to present the data garnered from sensation as a spatio-temporal world subject to the law of causality [see WWR1, 9–15]). As Schopenhauer writes, "[understanding] distinguishes animals from plants, as reason distinguishes humans from animals" (VC, 17). Through being able, unlike all other animals, to think with concepts, we are not confined merely to consider that which the intuition presents us with at any given moment. With the help of concepts, we can step back from the world and its present moment, in order to consider our experience from a more abstract, disinterested perspective, as well as being able to take into account both the past and the possible future when we, say, deliberate about which actions to undertake. We are able to see that, while all other beings are relatively unable to separate themselves from the will that permeates all things, we have the unique potential to distance ourselves from it and thereby find the genuine escape from the world that we are looking for.<sup>4</sup> In this way, the adoption of the objective standpoint is able to corroborate the lesson that we can discover from the subjective standpoint, namely, that we are able to view the world in different ways and potentially escape from it through a new form of seeing things,<sup>5</sup> due to the potential overwhelming of the will that is possible in tandem with our enhanced intellect.

We can thus see how consolation and explanation come together in this argument from the objective standpoint. Though we are able to see ourselves as part of an endlessly willing nature that is ultimately beset by overwhelming pain and suffering, we nevertheless can see that we stand at a pinnacle that results in both the pain of understanding the terrible predicament we stand in

and the means to potentially escape that situation. The understanding of the essence of the world as a whole and our place in it is inevitably accompanied by both the shock of pessimism and the hope for salvation.

Speaking generally, the success of the objective standpoint for Schopenhauer lies in the fact that nature as a whole is an expression of will, and each natural being points, in its own way, to the will and the character of its manifestation of that principle. As such, we can ‘read off’ inferences from nature in a variety of ways in order to confirm substantial metaphysical truths, which, as is the case with the identification of the thing in itself with will, were originally established from the subjective standpoint. However, such a ‘reading off’ should not be taken too directly: we should understand nature as ‘pointing towards’ certain metaphysical truths, in the form of symbols or signs, rather than offering straightforward material for inferences. Such a quasi-inference relies upon the important notion of corroboration, which underlies Schopenhauer’s account of the compatibility of the subjective and objective standpoints, which we will explore in more detail in the following section.

### THE COMPATIBILITY OF THE SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE STANDPOINTS

Given the manner in which Schopenhauer uses both the subjective and objective standpoints in the exposition of his philosophy, I argue that we must adopt a compatibility reading of his approach that recognises that the two standpoints are not in competition in relation to discerning metaphysical truths, though the subjective standpoint should ultimately be given primacy. Such a view is akin to that proposed by Janaway, who states that “Schopenhauer wants ultimately to maintain the ‘correlativity’ of both subjective and objective views. It is not, as has been claimed, that Schopenhauer switches from an initial idealist opposition to materialism to a later reconciliatory stance” (1989, 181). Schopenhauer, according to this view, never intended to set idealism (from a subjective standpoint) and materialism (from an objective standpoint) against each other and did not thereafter attempt to reconcile them in later works, such as *WN*. Rather, Schopenhauer wishes all along to combat the use of the objective standpoint alone, which leads to purely materialist philosophical systems, and results in a one-sided view of the world:

The fact is that what Schopenhauer chastises under the name of ‘materialism’ is the view which *one-sidedly* ‘forgets the subject’ yet pretends to *completeness* as an account of the world. What he is against is not the notion that an objective account of the intellect can be given, but the notion that all has been achieved

when such an account has been given; and . . . he is equally concerned to avoid a one-sidedly *subjective* view of the intellect. (Janaway 1989, 182)

Though Schopenhauer's adoption of the subjective standpoint may maintain primacy in the exposition of the metaphysics of will, it should not stand on its own, just as much as the objective standpoint should not stand on its own either. Rather, the two can be compatibly and fruitfully laid alongside each other, in order to ensure that our metaphysical system gives as full an explanation of the world as possible, utilising all the different perspectives we can gain upon it. Certainly, the two standpoints should not be construed as being in competition, as far as Schopenhauer sees it.

Schopenhauer's use of the objective standpoint as part of his philosophy is treated by Young as 'biological idealism,' who highlights it as the one of the ways in which Schopenhauer goes beyond Kant (see Young 1987, 8). Young points out the apparent strangeness of Schopenhauer using physiological considerations to defend transcendental idealism: If the human body, say, is mere appearance, then it cannot be used to demonstrate the ideality of space and time. As such, he states, Schopenhauer is left with two options:

[Either] he remains committed to the propriety of his appeal to the physiology and biology of the brain—in which case transcendental must be abandoned in favour of a less radical kind of idealism—or else he preserves transcendental idealism but concedes that the attempt to support it by other than orthodox Kantian methods is an aberration. (Young 1987, 10)

However, as I have been arguing, these are not the only two options available to Schopenhauer. Though he is certainly going beyond Kant in certain ways, it can be legitimately claimed that Schopenhauer retains his transcendental idealist credentials while using the objective standpoint in the manner we have been discussing, due to the way in which the objective standpoint can point towards insights regarding the essence of the world while not obviously going beyond Kantian epistemic limits. Further, as we have seen, Schopenhauer is committed to a secondary, supportive role for the objective standpoint, in that the primacy of and foundational role for the subjective viewpoint (which Kant would recognise) is retained. Some may disagree with this interpretation with regard to the extent to which Schopenhauer's use of the objective standpoint might be an 'aberration' from a Kantian standpoint, but at the very least, it is clear that he did not view his use of the objective standpoint in this way.

For this reason, we further do not need to accept Young's suggestion that Schopenhauer uses the objective standpoint as a *reductio*. The interpretation offered by Young revolves around the claim that, for Schopenhauer, truths

with regard to what is the case in the phenomenal world are relative to the objective standpoint, and that “from a transcendental viewpoint all such propositions are false” (1987, 11). Thus, all claims Schopenhauer makes from the objective standpoint, with regard to the phenomenal realm, are ultimately to be rejected, simply as part of “that image of the world presented by natural science” (*Ibid.*), which is unable to provide a complete explanation of things. Given this, Young interprets Schopenhauer’s use of the objective standpoint as a foundation for making claims in defence of transcendental idealism through providing a *reductio* of materialism:

Suppose . . . that the scientific image presents the world as it really is. One thing which then follows is that the way humans represent the world is determined by biology and physiology. But that makes it reasonable to believe [on the basis of interest in survival] that human representations of the world falsify reality. Hence, since the objective view is *itself* a human representation, it follows that it too, to some degree or other, is probably a falsification of reality. So the objective view entails its own falseness as an account of how the world really is. The objective view . . . undermines its own credentials as a rival account of the world to transcendental idealism. (1987, 12)

In contrast to my compatibility reading of the objective and subjective standpoints in Schopenhauer’s philosophy, Young is proposing that the two are meant to be in conflict, with the objective standpoint ultimately revealing its absurdity by undermining itself through its commitment to the view that our experience of the world both is and is not a good guide to the truth of things. There are a number of points we can raise in response to Young’s interpretation, in addition to the evidence put forward with regard to the way in which Schopenhauer believes nature points beyond itself towards its underlying grounds.

For one thing, if Young is correct, Schopenhauer goes to an awful lot of trouble to establish what would essentially be quite an unimportant point—indeed, he would have used a whole book (*WN*) and substantial portions of other works (*WWR* and *VC* in particular) to undertake a *reductio*. It seems unlikely that he would have spent so much time exploring the objective standpoint in order to not use it as part of the exposition of his metaphysical system. As Young also admits, this interpretation views Schopenhauer as making an argument that is “not entirely convincing” (*ibid.*), particularly as he offers no reason as to why the scientist, unlike the genius, is unable to rise above the potentially falsifying aspect of faculties focused on survival, and of course we should be reticent to attribute weak arguments to past philosophers if other interpretations are available to us (and the compatibility reading has the advantage of not setting science against philosophy, unlike in the *reductio*

interpretation). In addition, if this is what Schopenhauer intends, then he would have been more honest about it. Thus, I argue that the compatibility reading has more plausibility than Young's *reductio* interpretation.

Segala has also considered Schopenhauer's use of empirical observations from a metaphilosophical perspective. First of all, with regard to the place of *WN* in the corpus, he states that Schopenhauer's central claim made there, to the effect that all causality is fundamentally will, "is more an assertion than argument . . . [relying] on the demonstration that the will is the thing-in-itself in *The World as Will and Representation*" (2010, 30), and thus we can see *WN* (and the objective standpoint found within) as presupposing the results found in *WWR* from the subjective standpoint. As such, the foundational primacy of the subjective standpoint, with regard to the exposition of the metaphysics of will, is emphasised, in line with the interpretation offered here.

Segala further argues that *WN* reflects Schopenhauer's evolving views regarding the possibility of a philosophy of nature that allows for fruitful interaction between metaphysics and the natural sciences: that is, a new kind of philosophy of nature "considered not only as the discipline which philosophically describes the world according to a given metaphysics, but also as the conceptual frame where metaphysical notions are fruitfully intertwined with the latest results of scientific research" (2010, 29–30). However, such an interaction between science and metaphysics should not be supposed as a kind of Kantian "investigation into the limits of knowledge . . . [nor] a kind of supportive 'inference to the best explanation' for metaphysics" (2010, 29).

So, how should we understand this proposed interaction? The answer to such a question revolves around the notions of 'corroboration' and 'objectification.' Corroboration should be distinguished, Segala states, "from 'identity' or proof," and it should not be expected to "reinforce scientific or philosophical beliefs, rather it emphasises distance and differences between science and metaphysics as well as it offers a conceptual space—philosophy of nature—where those two disciplines can meet and dialogue" (2010, 31). Further to this, "corroboration does not increase or strengthen metaphysical knowledge; indeed, knowledge of the philosophical truth is independently required for establishing [a corroboration], because [it] exclusively originates in the connection of science and metaphysics within philosophy of nature" (*ibid.*). The project of finding corroboration for a given metaphysical system rests upon the pre-existing assumption of that system, and thus the results presented in *WN* are not intended on their own to bring any new converts to the metaphysics of will. Schopenhauer did not believe that an understanding of the metaphysics of will could be garnered from *WN* alone; rather, the hope must have been that, having been intrigued by the mysterious content of *WN*, the reader would seek out *WWR*, where the foundational exposition of the metaphysics of will is to be found, before approaching *WN* for a second time,

with the new possibility of understanding the corroborations offered by the review of empirical observations in the text.

Such an interpretation is confirmed by a note from 1821, when Schopenhauer discusses the possibility of a ‘philosophy of natural science,’ glossed as “an application of philosophical truths to natural science,” which is clearly intended to presuppose a pre-existing metaphysical system: “But now there must first exist the philosophical truths on which such *corollaria* are to be based” (MR3, 95). It is clear that Schopenhauer believes that corroboration only issues from the interaction between an already-established system of metaphysics and a given scientific theory, and thus the truth of both must be affirmed before corroboration can be gained. To this point, we can agree with Segala’s interpretation as cohering with that offered here; however, he goes somewhat beyond the interpretation offered here in stating that corroboration has no impact upon our existing metaphysical commitments, neither increasing nor strengthening them. If corroboration of the metaphysics of will from the observations of empirical science are not intended to achieve this, though, we may be left puzzled as to the purpose of seeking corroboration at all, with connected questions regarding the importance that Schopenhauer clearly attributes to *WN*, which Segala admits (see 2010, 27–28). To answer such an interpretive puzzle, we may need to dig deeper into the conception of the philosophy of nature that Segala attributes to Schopenhauer.

With regard to Schopenhauer’s conception of a philosophy of nature, Segala points to the importance of the influence of Schelling, whose project of *Naturphilosophie* inspires Schopenhauer to adopt a metaphilosophy that affirms the importance of contact between philosophy and the natural sciences (see 2010, 32). However, Schopenhauer believes that he can connect philosophy with the natural sciences more successfully than Schelling, using a distinction he makes between ‘absolute’ and ‘relative’ philosophy. Schopenhauer states that the “relative and comparative” (MR3, 95) philosophy offered by the philosophy of natural science is “the survey of the main results of a science from the highest, i.e., most general, standpoint which is possible within this science. It is the gathering of the principal results of the science into a general view of its subject which at the same time states the true method of treating such a science” (MR3, 96). The main method of such a relative philosophy of the natural sciences will involve the collecting of data, focusing on one natural science in particular, with the purpose of gaining an overall view of the picture of the world presented to us by that science. However, merely doing this is failing to offer an absolute philosophy, which is what philosophers should be aiming to provide.

A philosophy of natural science alone is not sufficient in meeting the all-encompassing scope of an absolute philosophy. Schopenhauer states that those who “do not know at all what philosophy is and ought to be . . . imagine

that a *philosophy of natural science* would just be *philosophy* and they dream of nothing else”: they fail to realise that “a *philosophy* contains very much more, namely a doctrine of the representation of the intellect, metaphysics of nature, of action and of the beautiful” (MR3, 95) and so forth. A philosophy which contains all these myriad elements would be “the philosophy of existence of general . . . an absolute philosophy” (ibid.), in contrast to the more limited scope of a relative philosophy of the natural sciences.

Whatever Schopenhauer wishes his philosophy of the natural sciences to be, it is clear that he does not want it to be merely relative, such that it is a mere philosophy of nature divorced from an absolute philosophy, conceived as the ‘philosophy of existence in general.’ In order to understand Schopenhauer’s conception of his new philosophy of natural science, from which he will be able to find corroboration for the metaphysics of will, then, we need to distinguish it from his notion of a relative philosophy of nature (though both stand on the middle-ground between philosophy proper and the natural sciences).

Schopenhauer states that a relative philosophy of nature is philosophical by itself “just to the extent that it is *universal*,” but it has to be linked to a pre-existing metaphysical system in order to form part of an all-encompassing absolute philosophy: “it is therefore that which will be directly connected to *philosophy pure and simple* . . . and stands provisionally as the *datum* for such a philosophy, as something worked out and finished, which saves the author of philosophy the trouble of first going himself down to the raw material” (MR3, 96). Such a philosophy of a science will be a time-saving measure for the philosopher, offering at a glance a universalised picture of the world as presented to us by a particular science, such that they can easily view the results of the science without having to engage in the scientific enterprise themselves, or indeed to delve too deeply into the scientific literature.

Schopenhauer clearly intends such an enterprise to be undertaken by the philosopher who has already committed themselves independently to a pre-existing metaphysical system and who wishes to find further data in support of their view. Methodologically, both the philosophy of a science and a metaphysical system can (and indeed should) be formulated separately and any corroboration between them, after this has been undertaken, gives validation to both sides:

The philosophy of every science does not require verification on the part of *philosophy pure and simple*, for it is found independently of this and is based on induction from its own science. Therefore, if it is correct in itself, it will always harmonize with true *philosophy pure and simple*, be this formed as it may. But conversely this *philosophy pure and simple* must be confirmed by every philosophy of an individual science, for the most universal truth is connected to the

one already more special and is elucidated by this. Therefore the philosophies of the individual sciences can already be worked out before a philosophy pure and simple exists, and when this comes, they will always harmonize with it. (ibid.)

This note gives us an insight into Schopenhauer's views regarding the potential formulation of a philosophy of natural science that can act as a useful counterpart to a genuine, absolute philosophy that considers 'existence in general.' It will involve the collating of data from the natural sciences, such that we are given the current universal view of the world proposed by a given science, which can then be compared with what we would expect given the assumption of an already-existing metaphysical system. The formulation of such a philosophy of natural science should be undertaken independently of a given metaphysical system, such that it is only based on the empirical observations of that science. The metaphysical system itself will also need to be formulated independently, though it could perhaps be enhanced by considering scientific observations in order to more fully become a system considering existence in general.

Corroboration will thus arise out of the idealised harmonious relation between the results of a successful empirical science and a truly insightful metaphysical system. As Segala states, the notion of corroboration thus "establishes the [proper] relationship between science (as incorporated into philosophy of science) and metaphysics" (2010, 34). In addition to this, the new conception of the philosophy of science, as standing between science and philosophy, establishes both their independence and the possibility of fruitful interaction, in contrast to a philosophy of nature, which perhaps brings the two disciplines too close together: Segala states that Schopenhauer, after the first edition of *WWR*, abandoned the traditional ideal of "the unity of knowledge," which led to a view of "philosophy of nature as a simple synthesis of scientific knowledge and philosophy" (2010, 37). Rather, in the early 1820s, Schopenhauer recognised the need to respect the independence of philosophy and the natural sciences, while carefully demarcating a sphere in which they can fruitfully interact, which he glosses as the area of corroboration in which an enhanced philosophy of the natural sciences can operate.

In relation to the interpretation of Schopenhauer's use of the objective standpoint offered here, we can perhaps agree with Segala's claim that corroboration from the empirical sciences is not intended to increase or strengthen our metaphysical commitments, but only in a certain sense. We can agree that the evidence presented in *WN* does not increase our metaphysical knowledge in that it does not add any substantive claims to the exposition of the metaphysics of will found in *WWR1*. Though there are certainly different emphases between the texts (as Segala [2010, 31] notes, we find a focus on the hierarchy of nature in *WN*, which is largely missing in *WWR1*), there is no



departure from or significant addition to the metaphysics of will in *WN*. So, in that sense, *WN* does not increase our metaphysical knowledge: presuming we had already read *WWR I* (which Schopenhauer does indeed assume), there is nothing more to be learned here about the metaphysics of will. However, we can resist Segala's interpretation insofar as we can maintain that the corroboration from empirical science found in *WN* can increase and strengthen our metaphysical *insight*, in that we are granted a wider perspective upon the world as interpreted through the metaphysics of will (for example, as I have argued, we can, through reflection from the objective standpoint, come to a deeper understanding of ourselves through a consideration of our position at the pinnacle of nature). As such, while considerations from the objective standpoint may not add anything to the metaphysics of will, they may nevertheless deepen our understanding of the significance of the world as a manifestation of will.

Another potential interpretation of Schopenhauer's use of the objective standpoint is offered by Wicks, who offers a view that seeks to harmonise the objective and subjective standpoints in Schopenhauer's system, as proposed here, but takes a slightly different approach. Wicks focuses on Schopenhauer's adoption of the standpoint of the natural sciences in *WN*, in which text it is

[assumed] more realistically that physical nature is fundamental . . . [allowing him] to explore natural facts for the sake of arriving at the metaphysics that Schopenhauer initially formulates from the idealistic standpoint. The metaphor is that of two people who dig from the different ends of an anticipated tunnel, and who arrive together at the midpoint to complete its length. One person is the philosopher; the other, the scientist. (2012, 156–7)

Wicks agrees with our interpretation here in arguing that the intention of Schopenhauer's investigations from the objective standpoint, particularly undertaken in *WN*, in which scientific theories are explored with a view to corroborating the pre-established metaphysics of will, is to show that even if one starts with realist assumptions, we can still ultimately gain something akin to Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will.

Wicks further argues that Schopenhauer wishes to set the objective and subjective standpoints side-by-side in a relation of 'reciprocal containment' (a notion discussed in Quine 1969, 83), which in this context "involves tempering the Kantian idealistic standpoint to strengthen the realistic outlook's legitimacy, by stating that neither idealism nor realism is an absolute philosophical perspective and that each is conditioned by the other" (2012, 158). Wicks seems to be arguing that neither the subjective nor the objective viewpoint has primacy for Schopenhauer; rather, they operate as equal

partners in a kind of ‘strange loop,’ in which our metaphysical reflections, no matter where we start, move through both idealist and realist considerations, ultimately leading us back to where we started. As an example of the strange loop in action in Schopenhauer’s system, Wicks discusses references made to the physical brain from the objective standpoint:

When referring to how brains are the result of the principle of sufficient reason’s constructive activity, he speaks from the idealistic view and explains the spatio-temporal world as an illusion created by our mental activity. Then, immersing himself within the content of that mental construction, he then identifies his own body, and then, his brain as a part of that body. Upon noting how his experiential perspective issues from his body within that construction, he then locates his perception within his brain. Once again reflecting that his brain is a product of the principle of sufficient reason, and with this, shifting from an external to an internal standpoint upon his body, he finds himself once again at the beginning of the strange loop . . . Schopenhauer can refer either to the brain as a function of the intellect, or to the intellect as a function of the brain, depending upon his assumed philosophical location in the loop. (2012, 159)

Though I support Wicks’s interpretation insofar as it seeks to highlight the harmonious relation between the objective and subjective standpoints in Schopenhauer’s philosophy, there are a couple of objections I would suggest. First, Schopenhauer attaches primary to the subjective standpoint, and not just for the mundane reason that one’s philosophical reflections have to start from somewhere. Schopenhauer holds that the subjective standpoint *must* be the starting point for philosophical reflection, in opposition to Wicks’s conception of two equal partners, where it does not seem to matter whether one begins with the objective or subjective standpoints, as the two naturally loop with each other anyway.

Also, if the reciprocal containment interpretation is correct, then it would seem strange for Schopenhauer to designate himself as an idealist above all other potential philosophical approaches. Wicks’s interpretation seems to imply that Schopenhauer is a realist as much as an idealist, which conflicts with his repeated commitment, placed at the forefront of the exposition of his philosophy, to idealism, as well as the praise heaped upon Kant’s transcendental idealism (see, for example, FR, 21). I argue that the complementary interpretation offered here allows us to harmonise the objective and subjective standpoints within the context of Schopenhauer’s system, while at the same time preserving the fundamental primacy he accords to idealism.

Finally, the compatibility reading offered here could potentially help us avoid the interpretation that Schopenhauer is in fact not an idealist at all. Snow and Snow argue for such a position. Though their argument focuses on Schopenhauer’s key metaphysical claim regarding the identification of

the essence of the world with will, they also discuss his appeal to facts from objective nature, including some concerning our own body, as potentially suggesting a non-idealist reading:

Clearly the remarks on embodiment and the will are more suggestive than illuminating, but at the very least it must be observed that the more seriously Schopenhauer's discussion of the prerepresentational (and thus prerational) nature of the awareness of the body and will is taken, the further he moves from a concept of the human subject which would be compatible with idealism. (1991, 651)

It is understandable that Schopenhauer's potentially very puzzling appeal to the objective standpoint could lead one to question his commitment to a genuine idealism, where the emphasis is often placed on the subjective standpoint alone. However, I would argue that the compatibility reading reveals how the objective standpoint can be legitimately used as supporting evidence for Schopenhauer's metaphysics, such that we do not have to take the drastic step of claiming that he is not an idealist after all, which goes against his own self-identification as an idealist (after all, he states of idealism that "no truth is more certain, no truth is more independent of all others and no truth is less in need of proof" [WWR1, 3]). Though the debate regarding Schopenhauer's use of the objective standpoint in relation to his idealist commitments will inevitably go on, I believe that the interpretation offered here gives us a plausible reading of a unified philosophical method underlying his reflections from both an objective and subjective standpoint.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has considered Schopenhauer's use of the subjective and objective standpoints, and has argued for a compatibilist reading of this philosophical method in the metaphysics of will. As part of this, we have sought to understand the use of empirical observations, particularly in *WN*, as corroborations for the metaphysics of will, in addition to the primary subjective standpoint, as well as the manner in which our reflections upon nature could potentially reveal, or at least point towards, metaphysical truths. We have been able to consider some competing metaphilosophical interpretations of Schopenhauer's use of the objective standpoint, offered by Young, Wicks and Segala. Though I follow Segala and Wicks in offering a more positive reading of the interaction between the objective and subjective standpoints in Schopenhauer's system, I disagree that their interaction takes the form of a loop (given, amongst other things, the primacy of the subjective standpoint),

and I hold that considerations from the objective standpoint can have an impact upon our metaphysical insight, even though it may not add anything to the conceptualised metaphysics of will, as presented in Schopenhauer's works.

Looking ahead, Schopenhauer's use of standpoints has wider metaphysical significance for him beyond the mere use of scientific observations to corroborate the metaphysics of will, in that his entire system is concerned with our ability, as human beings, to adopt different perspectives upon the world. Such perspectives change the way we see things, and also change ourselves, in such a fundamental manner that we can gloss them as differing forms of consciousness. We shall see, in chapter 4, that the philosophical examination of these forms of consciousness begins very early on in Schopenhauer's notebooks, and goes on to characterise his philosophical approach, encapsulated in the famous salvific endpoint of his philosophy, namely, the negation or denial of the will.

However, before then, we need to understand Schopenhauer's account of the possibility of communicating philosophy to others, and of the philosopher having a discernible practical impact upon those whom they speak or write to. As part of this, we will need to consider further aspects of Schopenhauer's epistemology, including his discussion of the nature of reason and abstract representation, as well as its connection to language. With this in mind, we will then be able to approach the topics of the forms of consciousness and the developmental aspects of Schopenhauer's philosophy in chapter 4.

## NOTES

1. Schopenhauer states that, "the *subject* [of knowing] is the seat of all cognition, but is not itself cognized by anything" (WWR1, 5).

2. Schopenhauer attributes great importance to *WN* and its role in providing an empirical corroboration of his philosophy. It gives, he states, "an arithmetic proof of my fundamental dogma, which in this way is grounded more specifically and in more detail, just as it is understood more clearly, more comprehensibly, and more precisely than anywhere else" (WN, xi). By considering the results of empirical observation, we are able to "immediately arrive here at the core of [Schopenhauer's] metaphysics, indicating the points of contact of this metaphysics with the natural sciences" (ibid.). In a letter from 1844, he writes of *WN* that it presents the core of his metaphysics in a more explicit manner than in any of his other works (see GB, 200).

3. Gottfried also points to the philosophically significant status that Schopenhauer grants to the hierarchy in nature and the ensuing struggle between all things: As he puts it, *WWR* "proposed to show how volition asserted itself by means of an ascending hierarchy of nature. The result was a chain that moved from nature through the animal world and finally up to man at the top . . . [This] evolutionary climb, which Schopenhauer so eloquently described, bore witness to the need for mortifying the

will. Only by exposing nature and history as the rule of force could the scientist become a spiritual teacher” (1975, 332–33).

4. This is not to say that I am claiming that reason directly brings salvation, as far as Schopenhauer is concerned; rather, the intellectual capacities granted to us by our reason is a condition of the will being able to deny itself within an individual human being. Our reflections from the objective standpoint are potentially a part of this soteriological process.

5. I discuss the importance of the consideration of different possible forms of consciousness for Schopenhauer’s philosophical approach in chapter 4.

## Communicating Philosophy

In the first chapter, I considered the origin of philosophy in the ‘need for metaphysics,’ sitting alongside religion, as part of the human response to the intuitive wrongness of the world. Such an origin for philosophy, however, has a somewhat negative impact insofar as it feeds into the working-methods and unavoidable limitations of philosophy, which is encapsulated in Schopenhauer’s theory of language and communication. In this chapter, we will examine Schopenhauer’s argument that the philosophical enterprise is fundamentally hindered by the fact that it is both grounded in intuitive insight and can only be grasped and communicated through abstract concepts. As a result of these limitations, philosophers need to write with care, with the aim in mind of inspiring a reader to discover the intuitive insights underlying the text for themselves. First, though, we will begin with a consideration of the value of philosophical writing from a Schopenhauerian perspective, as grounded in genuine intuitive insight, and the way in which the philosopher is bound to converse with others through an imperfect ‘community of concepts.’

### THE COMMUNITY OF CONCEPTS AND THE ROLE OF REASON

The philosopher who has achieved genuine insight (having been inspired by their inborn need for metaphysics) will naturally seek to communicate such insight to others, through the form of writing. Schopenhauer argues that philosophical literature must be grounded in such an independent, original insight: “The only writer worth reading is the one who writes directly from the material in his own mind” (PP2, 534). Such an individual, Schopenhauer states, will be writing “for the sake of the subject,” having recognised that they have had “thoughts or experiences that seem to them worthy of communicating” (PP2, 532). Such a writer is to be distinguished from those who “write for the sake of writing . . . [who] need money and that is why they write, for money,”

and whose writings will be worthless, as “[only] he who writes solely for the sake of the subject writes anything worthy of being written” (ibid.). The philosopher who is genuinely seeking to convey the insights that they have garnered will be writing in a selfless manner, with the conviction that they have cognized something which is worthy of being disseminated to other individuals, and this is the mark of all worthwhile philosophical literature.

Further, given that their work is grounded in a genuine insight that has been gained before the writing process is begun, it follows that their thinking must be settled and thoroughly reflected upon first. In this regard, Schopenhauer distinguishes between,

three kinds of authors; first those who write without thinking. They write from memory, from reminiscences, or even directly from the books of others. This class is the most numerous. —Secondly, those who think while they write. They think in order to write, and are very common. —Thirdly, those who have thought before they set out to write. They write merely because they have thought, and are rare. (PP2, 533)

The writing process of any worthwhile philosophical literature will only begin until the author has gained certain thoughts independently of other thinkers, in that genuine insight can only be garnered through one’s own resources alone. Hence, anyone who merely parrots the thoughts of others, or who attempts to think as they go along, will inevitably fall short of the standard for worthwhile philosophical literature. Schopenhauer states that such individuals will “think only about *books*, about what others have said,” and “they will always remain under their influence and consequently never achieve originality” (PP2, 534). Those who are able to write worthwhile philosophical literature, on the other hand, will not be focused on books, but rather “stimulated to think by *things themselves*,” which will ultimately issue in reflections that touch on “the higher subjects” (ibid.).

Schopenhauer thus approaches philosophy as both a communal and individual enterprise: though, as we shall see, the communal aspect of philosophical reflection faces great difficulties, with the effect that the emphasis overall ends up on what the individual can achieve through their own resources. Due to such an emphasis, Schopenhauer states that genius will be inclined to solitude, “to which they are driven as much by their difference from others *as the inner wealth with which they are equipped*” (WN, 32). A genius is able to garner sufficient resources for their philosophical and artistic endeavours from within, and thus do not require or desire the influence of and interaction with others. Such an approach is encapsulated in his discussion of the use of dialogue with others with regard to the unpacking of philosophical insights, which is rather limited in its potential impact:

One understands only oneself entirely . . . others only half way; the best one can achieve is a community of concepts, but not the intuitive apprehension that forms the basis of these concepts. And so profound, philosophical truths are never helped to light on the path of communal thinking, in dialogue. To be sure, however, this method is very useful as practice, for stirring up problems and for airing them, and later on for testing, checking and criticizing the presented solution. (PP 2, 7)<sup>1</sup>

This quotation offers some key insights into Schopenhauer's understanding of the nature of the foundations of philosophy, the communication of philosophical insight, and the way in which he understood his own role in the production of philosophical works. Genuine philosophical insight is grounded in intuition. All we can achieve through dialogue with others is a 'community of concepts,' insofar as dialogue between individuals takes place at the conceptual level, with no possibility of communicating the original intuitive apprehension on which philosophical insight is based.<sup>2</sup> However, that does not mean that philosophical dialogue is useless, as it can offer both inspiration for individuals to reflect upon particular universal problems for themselves and thereafter attempt to communicate any lessons learned to others.

The communication of philosophical ideas is undoubtedly limited, though: "[reason] speaks to reason while remaining in its own province: it sends and receives abstract concepts, representations that cannot be intuited" (WWR1, 47). Schopenhauer argues that we clearly do not communicate imagistic thoughts at the level of intuition, as otherwise our experience of communicating with others would be very different:

While another person is speaking, do we at once translate his speech into pictures of the imagination that instantaneously flash past us and are linked together in accordance with grammatical inflexions? Certainly not. The meaning of his words is grasped immediately and quite accurately without any admixture of phantasms. It is the faculty of reason which speaks to the faculty of reason. They are abstract concepts, non-perceptive representations. (MR1, 479)

We are only able to communicate abstract thoughts to each other, and not the particularised, imagistic thoughts that are our intuitive representations.<sup>3</sup> There is a fundamental limit to our language and communication, in that we cannot directly exchange intuitive thoughts with each other: We can only trade concepts, with 'reason speaking to reason.'

Due to such a divide between the conceptual level, where communication takes place, and the level of intuition, where genuine philosophical insight occurs, the philosopher has a difficult task in front of them:



When it comes to cognition of the essence of the world, there is a wide gulf between the two kinds of cognition that only philosophy can traverse. In fact, everyone is conscious of all philosophical truths on an intuitive level or in concrete fashion: but to bring these truths to abstract knowledge, to reflection, is the business of philosophers, who should do, and can do, nothing else. (WWR1, 452)

When we are engaged in metaphysical reflection, we should ultimately only be concerned with genuine insight at the level of intuitive cognition, and cannot merely rely upon concepts alone to provide us with meaningful cognizance about metaphysical issues, particularly those general concepts, such as 'being' and 'existence,' from which philosophers regularly delight in inferring apparent truths: "novel fundamental insights can only be drawn, with the help of the power of judgement, from intuitive cognition, the sole type of cognition that is full and rich . . . [and so] the more that is thought *under* a concept, the less is thought *in* it" (WWR2, 68).

The philosopher has a very specific task set for them, namely, of taking insights that are available to all at the intuitive level and translating them into abstract terms on the conceptual level, in order that at least some semblance of the original insight can be communicated to and discussed with others: "To use concepts that abstractly, universally and clearly reflect the whole essence of the world, and to transcribe a reflected image of the world into permanent concepts that are always available to reason: this and nothing else is philosophy" (WWR1, 453). Due to this, we must accept that we will have to do most of the work ourselves if we wish to come to philosophical insight, with the attendant consoling benefits it might bring: "Neither our knowledge nor our insights are ever especially increased by comparing and discussing what is said by another . . . Only through one's own consideration of things themselves can insight and knowledge really be increased, for it alone is the ever ready and ever proximate living source [of philosophy]" (PP2, 8).

Thankfully, we do have a greater understanding of ourselves internally, in the sense that our conscious happenings are completely open to us, and it is this special access to the data of our consciousness that means we are not left in a hopeless position. As already stated, though, we are not left entirely on our own. Dialogue with others can have a positive role to play in aiding our philosophical reflection: "*Controversy* and *disputing* on a theoretical subject can without doubt become fruitful for both implicated parties, insofar as it corrects or confirms the thoughts they have and also awakens new ones" (PP2, 25). Dialogue with others can point to certain philosophical problems and expand upon them as much as is possible on the conceptual level, though ultimately it will be up to the individual on their own to think through the problems themselves at the level of intuition and come up with their own

potential solutions, which in turn can then be communicated and evaluated with others, though again imperfectly due to the need to return to the conceptual level. In understanding Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, and indeed the presentation of his philosophy as a whole, it is important to clarify this model of philosophical exploration on both the individual and social level.

## EXPERIENCE AND CONCEPTS

The role granted by Schopenhauer to reason, in its relation to the intellect, is particularly significant with regard to his account of language and communication. He argues that reason is that intellectual faculty whose purpose is the generation and manipulation of concepts, which he glosses as "*abstract representations*," which are to be "opposed to the intuitive representations from which, however, concepts are derived" (FR, 97). He states that "our reason, or the faculty of thought, has as its fundamental essence the capacity for abstractions, or the ability to form *concepts*" (FR, 100). Schopenhauer can therefore be seen as following a Locke or Hume-style concept-empiricism, in which the content of concepts is taken (or abstracted) by reason from our experience, both of ourselves and the world around us.<sup>4</sup>

As concepts are developed from experience through mental operations such as combination and abstraction, there will be no such thing as a 'simple concept,' and further, we can use a method of checking whether our concepts are genuinely grounded in cognition on the basis of whether they can be traced back to our experience, both of ourselves through introspection and our experience of the world around us:

you think of a concept, you must also be able to specify its content . . . [It] is not only necessary that it be decomposable into its distinguishing features, these must always be capable of further analysis, even if they are abstractions, and so on and so forth until we come to intuitive cognition and thus refer to concrete things. We give substance to the last of the abstractions through clear intuition of these concrete things, and thereby guarantee their reality as well as the reality of all the higher abstractions that rest on them. (WWR2, 69)

Further, Schopenhauer argues that, "in the end, the series of cognitive grounds must terminate with a concept that has its ground in intuitive cognition. For the world of reflection as a whole is based on the intuitive world as its cognitive ground" (WWR1, 48–49).

Schopenhauer's construal of reason and its limited abilities thus marks a clear contrast with Kant's portrayal of reason in the *Critical philosophy*: as Janaway points out, "[Schopenhauer] denies to reason any of the distinctive

roles that Kant found for it, namely the production of transcendental ideas, and, as practical reason, the role of serving as the foundation for ethics” (2014, 36). Reason is relegated to a much more limited role, dealing with the content of intuitive cognition with a view to abstracting concepts from it.

Schopenhauer’s allegiance to a form of concept-empiricism is perhaps a reflection of the influence of Locke, alongside other notable empiricists, such as Berkeley and Hume (and we know from the notebooks that he read Locke in the early years of his philosophical development<sup>5</sup>—see MR2, 444–45<sup>6</sup>). Indeed, Janaway states that in Schopenhauer’s treatment of abstract ideas, “as found paradigmatically in Locke, [we find] something of a reversion to pre-Kantian theories of concepts and reason” (2014, 36). Cartwright (2003) argues that Locke particularly stands out, amongst other empiricist influences, as having a positive treatment in Schopenhauer’s corpus, and we see Schopenhauer stating that a clear development can be seen in the philosophical tradition from Locke to him, via Kant (see PP1, 93–94). Elsewhere, with regard to Locke’s distinction between primary and secondary qualities, Schopenhauer credits it as the beginning in the philosophical tradition of the distinction between thing in itself and appearance (see PP1, 17). Schopenhauer, then, clearly sees Locke as having significant philosophical importance in terms of the development of the tradition towards Kant, a process of refinement which ends with the metaphysics of will. As Cartwright puts it, Schopenhauer “tended to view his relationship to Kant in terms comparable to those through which he conceived Kant’s relationship to Locke. Just as Schopenhauer claimed that his philosophy transcended Kant’s, while retaining fidelity to Kantian insights, he claimed that Kant’s philosophy transcended Locke’s, while retaining fidelity to Lockean insights” (2003, 149).

Through the developmental line from Locke to Schopenhauer, via Kant, we see a process in which fundamental insights are retained through the revolutions in thought brought about by transcendental idealism and the metaphysics of will. One of the major ways in which Locke’s influence can be seen on Schopenhauer’s philosophy is the treatment of concepts: for example, he praises Locke for his project of focusing on the origins of concepts, as well as his critique of innate ideas (see PP1, 49). In particular, he believes that Locke’s approach to concepts is superior to that of Kant’s, insofar as the role granted to concepts in relation to experience, in the form of the categories, in the Critical philosophy is fundamentally misguided (see the discussion of the categories in WWR1, 535–57).

One of the consequences of Schopenhauer’s concept-empiricism is that concepts will imperfectly reflect what is available to us in intuitive cognition, though they have the positive role of aiding our thought in various ways:

their formation, the faculty of abstraction reduces complete and hence, intuitive representations . . . to their constituents in order to be able to think about these separately, each in itself, as different properties or relations of things. But now, with this process, representations necessarily lose their intuitive quality . . . The formation of a concept occurs generally by dropping much from what is given intuitively in order to be able to think in isolation of what remains. A concept is thus a reduction in thought of that which is intuited. (FR, 98)

[it] involves discarding useless baggage in order to deal more easily with those aspects of cognition that are to be compared and thus put to work. In so doing, we leave out many non-essential aspects of real things that serve only to confuse us, and work with the few but essential determinations that are thought in abstraction. (WWR2, 68)

Schopenhauer holds that despite the benefits that being able to think with concepts brings us, nevertheless something is ‘lost in translation’ in the abstraction process from intuition to conceptual reflection on the part of reason, and this is a key point that we will have to bear in mind as we proceed.

Abstract cognizance is taken to be inferior to intuitive cognizance, though it does have some advantages. In an interesting passage, introducing the topic of the distinction between reason and intuition, Schopenhauer uses imagery of light and darkness to discuss the limits of abstract cognizance in comparison with intuitive cognizance:

As if from the direct light of the sun into the borrowed reflection of the moon, we now pass from immediate, intuitive representation (which presents only itself and is its own warrant) into reflection, the abstract, discursive concepts of reason (which derive their entire content only from and in relation to this intuitive cognition). As long as we maintain ourselves purely in intuition, everything is clear, stable and certain. There is no questioning, no doubting, no error . . . But with abstract cognition and reason came doubt and error, in the theoretical sphere, and in the practical, care and remorse. (WWR1, 41–42)

This passage reflects Schopenhauer’s desire to ensure that the both the advantages and deficiencies of reason are noted. We must remember the dependency of reason upon the content of intuitive cognizance, and that it only deals with concepts, which are the imperfect, less vivid mirrors of our direct experience.

With regard to the benefits of concepts, Schopenhauer states that they aid our thought, in that they have less content than intuitive representations and are thus easier to handle intellectually, as well as allowing us to focus on particular aspects of our experience that are of especial interest for whatever purposes we may have:

Of the many representations from which they are abstracted, concepts contain only the very part that is being used; if instead one wanted to bring to mind any representation itself through the imagination, one would have to drag along a load of inessentials and would be confused by them; now, however, by applying concepts one thinks of only the parts and relations of all these representations that are needed for the task at hand. (FR, 101)

Due to the focused, limited (in terms of content) nature of concepts, we can achieve more substantive mental feats with regard to thought and reflection, which to some extent makes up for the inability of concepts to fully capture the content of intuitive cognition:

We can assess the inestimable value of *concepts* and thus of *reason* when we survey the infinite quantity and diversity of things and states that exist both successively and simultaneously, and reflect on the fact that language and writing (the signs of concepts) can nevertheless give us precise information as to each thing and each relation, whenever and wherever it might have been; because even a relatively *small number* of concepts can deal with and represent an infinity of things and states. (WWR2, 68)

The value of concepts lies in their role in expanding our mental capacities, such that we can easily capture a variety of information about an infinite number of topics and communicate that information to others.

Schopenhauer states that abstract reflection allows us to easily reflect upon sets of things, so we can think about the essences of kinds of things: “the concept does not preserve what is intuited or what is thus sensed: rather, it preserves only what is essential to this and in an entirely altered form, yet as its adequate representative” (WWR2, 67–8). Thus, reason has a role to play in (imperfectly) abstracting philosophical notions from our intuitive insights by attempting to identify the essences of things that philosophy tries to discover. Though something is inevitably lost in the transition from intuition to concept, this is nevertheless the process that philosophical reflection has to follow. Reason is the faculty that achieves all these feats concerning concepts and language:

acquisition of [speech] occurs on the basis of the apprehension of the intuitive world, the complete essence of which it is the fundamental business of reason to set down in abstract concepts, a business reason can only carry out through language. With the acquisition of language, then, the whole mechanism of reason . . . is brought to consciousness. (FR, 100)

Language is thus understood as the medium through which reason's generation and manipulation can come to consciousness, such that we can then attempt to communicate with others.

Further, Schopenhauer holds that it is only concepts that can be communicated through language, in that language is an intrinsic part of conceptual reflection by reason: "*reason . . . obviously reduces to what is made possible only by abstract, discursive, reflective, mediated cognition, tied to words*" (FR, 110). Schopenhauer argues that "[all] thinking . . . and so all inner intellectual activity in general, requires either words or images" (FR, 103), and so language is invaluable with regard to the advanced mental feats, such as reflecting upon different possibilities, necessity, and the future, that only human beings can undertake. Thus, if we wish to transmit to others that which we have learned through intuition, the content of such cognition will have to be imperfectly translated into concepts, for it then to be capable of being communicated. So, we will ultimately be unable to capture thoughts, including the core insights of genuine metaphysical reflection, in language, with the result that whatever is communicated will always fall short: "The actual life of a thought lasts only until it reaches the borderline of words; there it petrifies and is henceforth dead, but indestructible . . . For as soon as our thinking has found words it is no longer profound or serious in the deepest sense" (PP2, 539).

Unfortunately for us, while literature brings the benefits of being able to make a record of thoughts that can travel far, and last for a long time after we have gone, such a record will always be imperfect, as something is always lost in translation in the process from intuition to language at the conceptual level. When we use language to attempt to capture thoughts, we lose some of the original nuance and detail which our thoughts can have (WWR2, 71). Language is therefore an imperfect and necessary tool: it allows us to have many intellectual capabilities, which are unavailable to all other animals, and yet it is unable to fully capture the details of our mental life.

To sum up our discussion to this point, Schopenhauer argues that reason relies upon the content of intuitive cognition for its base material for the generation of concepts. With regard to rational reflection upon our experience, reason seeks, as Schopenhauer states, to "[touch] on the limits of intuitive representations in order to come to an understanding of them for the purpose of connecting what is given empirically and grasped intuitively with clearly thought-out, abstract concepts so as to completely possess it" (FR, 103). Reason's role is to make sense of our experience by reflecting upon its content and attempting to subsume it under a rule or concept. The benefits of this capacity can be significant indeed:

Thinking, operating with the aid of intuitive representations, is the real core of all cognition, as it can be traced back to the source, to the basis of all concepts. Therefore it is the producer of all truly original thoughts, all primary fundamental insights, and all discoveries . . . Among these belong certain thoughts that run through our minds, coming and going, dressing themselves first in this and then in that intuition, until finally, achieving clarity, they fix themselves in concepts and find words. (FR, 103–4)

In this way, reason is able to come to significant realisations regarding that which presents itself in our experience, as long as it maintains its focus upon content garnered from our intuition. Schopenhauer argues that it is this intuition “which *reason* . . . following the material provided by cognition, then works up into concepts, which it sensibly fixes through words, and then it has the material for its endless combinations through the judgements and inferences that constitute the web of our world of thought” (FR, 115). Though the process may take a large amount of reflection, eventually some insights may come to a level of conceptual clarity such that they may be expressed in language. As the use of language by reason in philosophical communication is so vital, we will explore this aspect of Schopenhauer’s account further in the following section.

## CONCEPTS, REASON AND LANGUAGE

A benefit of the ability to have concepts is that it motivates and enables our capacity for language. Schopenhauer posits an essential connection between our use of concepts and the human capacity for language-use:

Now since, as I have said, representations that are sublimated, and thereby decomposed into abstract concepts, have forfeited all their intuitive quality, they would completely escape consciousness and would thus have no value for the intended operations of thought if they were not fixed and held fast in our senses by arbitrary signs: these signs are words. Therefore insofar as they make up the contents of the lexicon, that is, of language, words always refer to *general* representations, concepts, never to intuitive things. (FR, 99)

Our ability to think with concepts is inextricably tied to our use of language: indeed, generating concepts would be practically useless without being able to link them to words, as part of our language, that can then be communicated.

In fact, even further than this, Schopenhauer offers what is perhaps quite a strange argument for the claim that, to a certain extent, conceptual thought relies upon our capacity for language. He begins by stating that,

Our whole consciousness, with its inner and outer perception, always has time as its form. Concepts on the other hand, as representations that have arisen through abstraction and are thoroughly general and distinct from all things, have (in this quality) a being that is certainly objective to a certain extent, and yet does not belong to any temporal sequence. (WWR2, 70)

Concepts cannot be brought to consciousness on their own, in that while consciousness falls under the a priori form of time, concepts do not. The reason for this is that they are not particulars, more specifically, they are not imagistic (so the concept of ‘dog’ is not some generalised picture of ‘dog in general’): “not all representations (*ideas*) are intuitive images, and in fact precisely those that must be designated by words are mere *concepts* (*abstract notions*), and these by nature are not intuitive” (WWR2, 72). Concepts are “not fully determinate representations,” due to their abstract nature and it is this feature which allows them to have “an extension or sphere, even in cases where only a single real object corresponds to it” (WWR1, 50).

If we are to bring concepts to consciousness, then, we will require a tool that allows us to particularise concepts, such that they can be brought under the form of time, and this, Schopenhauer argues, is one of the roles of language: “[Concepts], in order to enter into the immediate presence of an individual consciousness and therefore be capable of being inserted into a temporal sequence, they must to a certain extent be reduced again to the nature of particular things, individualized and thus linked to a sensible representation: i.e., to a *word*” (WWR2, 70). Words are the way in which we bring concepts into consciousness, acting as a means of ‘fixing’ concepts in consciousness, such that we are able to reflect upon them, and make an attempt to communicate them to others. In this way, “word and language are thus the indispensable means of clear thinking” (WWR2, 71). Words, then, are used to denote certain concepts, and act as an aid for concentrating on, and thinking with, the concepts that we have. Without these words, we could not fix the concepts in question in our minds: “the concept is a representation, and its safe keeping and clear consciousness are bound up with the word” (WWR2, 67).

Schopenhauer also attributes a particular role to the sentence, and the rules of grammar that make sentence-construction possible. As part of his critique of Kant, Schopenhauer appeals to the importance of grammar for our ability to conduct high-level thinking in order to explain what he takes to be Kant’s incorrect claims concerning the categories, an error which Aristotle also falls into: “What they were both looking for under the rubric of the categories was the most general concepts under which people had to subsume all things, different as they are, concepts through which everything in existence would ultimately be thought. This is why Kant conceived of them as the forms of all thought” (WWR1, 566). Kant is led astray by the importance of certain



general concepts with regards to our ability to conduct high-level thinking. Schopenhauer claims, though, that it is not Kant's categories which act as the forms of thought. It is actually the rules of grammar, the manner in which we can build up words into sentences, which enables our high-level intellectual abilities:

Grammar is to logic as clothing is to the body. So, these very highest concepts, this ground bass of reason that supports all specific thought and without which thinking cannot take place—should they not ultimately rest on concepts which, precisely because of their exceeding universality (transcendentality), are not expressed in individual words but rather in whole classes of words . . . Should they not ultimately be those distinctions of concepts which make the word that expresses them either a noun or an adjective, a verb or an adverb, a pronoun, a preposition . . . in short the parts of speech? After all, these indisputably describe the forms that all thought must initially assume and in which it immediately moves. This is why they are the essential linguistic forms. (WWR1, 566–67)

As Schopenhauer conceives it, the human ability to construct languages, including an important role for the rules of grammar and the different parts of speech, is tied to the various ways in which we can manipulate abstract thoughts. As such, we can begin to see how an analysis of language could potentially produce revelations regarding the manner in which we are able to carry out high-level abstract thinking. It is our ability for language-use that enables much of our cognition, and not concepts themselves.

Schopenhauer therefore gives an important role in our thinking and communication to our ability to construct sentences. Trautmann states that, with regard to the function of the sentence, Schopenhauer argues that a “sentence is the sign of a concept too complex for individual or unrelated words. A sentence's concept demands a team of words, organized into subject and predicate, in which each word is necessary and all cooperate according to rules laid down by the language” (1975, 148). Sentences are vital in denoting concepts that cannot be captured in a single word, thus expanding our ability to communicate concepts, with different levels of detail, from one individual to the other. Following the Kantian line, Schopenhauer states that we think through judgements, and each such judgement consists of recognising a subject-predicate relation (WWR1, 567), and this is expressed in turn in the form of a sentence. There is, then, a direct connection between the forms of thought and their expression in the laws of grammar, which are manifested in the construction of sentences in a natural language.

Schopenhauer separates the judgements of thought into three parts, “the subject, predicate and copula,” and states that the “*parts of speech* and the forms of grammar are . . . ways of expressing [these] . . . as well as the

possible relations between [them]” (WWR1, 569). In this manner, he claims that we can view nouns, articles and pronouns as expressing the subject of the judgement in thought; adjectives, adverbs and prepositions for expressing the predicate part of the judgement; and verbs for expressing the copula. As already stated, a philosophy of language that analysed these fundamental features of our language could, due to the connection between forms of thought and our rules of grammar, be revealing about the operations of our mind: “Philosophical grammar teaches us the precise mechanism for expressing the forms of thought . . . [in a similar way to which] logic tells us about the operations with the forms of thought themselves” (ibid.).

However, Schopenhauer is keen to stress that an analysis of language will not necessarily directly yield information regarding the forms of thought, and thus we must proceed with caution if we are to make such an attempt: “the forms of thought are not to be found so directly and straightforwardly in words, or indeed in the parts of speech” (WWR1, 567–68). He makes a familiar point with regard to the possibility of different natural languages, as well as the flexibility of language in offering different options to communicate the same thought, such that we have to make a distinction between sentences and the propositions they express:

The same judgement can be expressed in different languages, or even with different words or different parts of speech in the same language and yet the thought remains the same, and consequently so does its form: because the thought could not remain the same if the forms of thought were themselves different. But the verbal structure could certainly be different while the thought, or the form of the thought, remains the same, because this is just the outer clothing on the thought, although this thought is inseparable from *its* form. So grammar only explains the clothing on the forms of thought (WWR1, 568).

While we can understand the grammar of our natural languages as based on, and hinting at, the forms of our thought, we must nevertheless not claim that our grammar offers a transparent glimpse into the forms of thought. Language allows us to express various thoughts in potentially quite different ways and so we must tread with caution: “The parts of speech can therefore be derived from the original forms of thought themselves, forms that are independent of all language: their function is to express these with all their modifications. They are the instruments of the forms of thought, the clothing that must fit their structure perfectly so that the structure can be recognized in it” (ibid.). As the structures of natural languages do not perfectly express the forms of thought, such clothing will not be a ‘perfect fit.’ However, in general terms, Schopenhauer clearly believes that there is a deep connection between

grammar and the forms of thought, such that we can read back to some extent from grammar to the forms of thought.

In the following section, we will continue our exploration of Schopenhauer's theory of communication by considering further the hurdles philosophers have to overcome in seeking to render philosophical insights into language.

## CLARITY AND THE LIMITS OF LANGUAGE

Reflecting his views regarding the inherently limited nature of language, and thus our inability to directly communicate some key philosophical insights, Schopenhauer states that there are some thoughts "which never find words, and unfortunately these are the best" (FR, 104). The task of the philosopher involves the attempted use of reason to translate deep intuitive insights into concepts, such that they can be expressible in language and communicated to others, but the difficulty of such a task leaves those who wish to convey metaphysical truths to others in a difficult, almost impossible position. The difficulty of making such a transition from intuition to abstract cognition is one that haunts the metaphysical enterprise:

true and original knowledge, even any genuine philosopheme, at its innermost core, or at its root, must have some kind of intuitive apprehension. Although something momentary and single, this subsequently imparts spirit and life to the entire explanation, no matter how exhaustive . . . [whereas any] purely rational verbiage is merely a clarification of what follows from given concepts, which actually brings nothing new to the light of day. (FR, 104–5)

The philosopher has no choice but to use abstract cognition, in order to attempt the clarification of intuitive insight in concepts prior to its communication with others, but such a task will be fraught with difficulty, given the need to maintain a sufficient link with the original intuitive insight throughout the abstraction and clarification process undertaken by our reason. Philosophers must ensure that they remember that "*reason* has absolutely no *material*, but simply a formal content" (FR, 115), in that it relies upon intuition for genuine content with which it can generate concepts and reflect upon them, with the aid of language. If we do not do so, then we may be misled (as were many post-Kantians) in believing that reason can "through its own means [provide] original material knowledge, knowledge therefore beyond all possibility of experience, positively enlightening us—the idea of reason as something that must contain *innate ideas*" (FR, 117).

Though it is important from the point of view of philosophy, reason nevertheless has a specific, limited role, and pales in epistemological significance

in comparison with the genuine insight available to us through intuitive cognition. In particular, we must not take reason as providing us with its own original insight into the nature of things, and thus as a potential source of metaphysical truths on its own. The fact that philosophy has to operate through the use of reason means that philosophy will always face difficulties in being grasped and communicated to others.

Schopenhauer's theory of language and communication entails that one must at some point attempt to conduct philosophical reflection at the conceptual level, and herein lies the difficulties that face the philosopher, stemming from the nature of language. Schopenhauer rejects the definition of philosophy as "a science *made of nothing but concepts*," on the basis that "the entire property of concepts is nothing other than what has been deposited there after having borrowed and begged it from intuitive cognition, this real and inexhaustible source of all insight. This is why a true philosophy cannot be spun out of mere abstract concepts, but instead must be grounded on observation and experience, inner as well as outer" (PP2, 9). In a similar vein, Schopenhauer states that regarding "the *source or fundament* of metaphysical cognizance, I have already declared myself in opposition . . . to the presupposition, even reiterated by *Kant*, that it must lie in *mere concepts*. Concepts cannot be the first thing in any cognizance, for they are always drawn from some perception" (WW2, 199). Schopenhauer subscribes to a Humean-style 'copy principle' with regard to the generation of concepts, according to which concepts are constructed, in various ways, from the data of our experience or intuition, either of ourselves or the world around us: "everything purely and abstractly conceived nevertheless must borrow its entire material and content from what is intuited" (PP1, 49).

Philosophical insight, Schopenhauer then goes on to claim, is gained only through intuition and not through concepts, so such insights cannot be gained at the conceptual level: "Philosophy . . . has experience as its object, . . . [that is] experience itself, generally and as such, according to its possibility, its realm, its essential content, its internal and external elements, its form and substance. Consequently, that philosophy must indeed have empirical foundations and cannot be spun out of pure, abstract concepts" (PP2, 18). As part of the empiricist aspect of Schopenhauer's philosophical outlook, the ultimate basis of genuine philosophy is taken to be the nature and content of experience, including both our apparent experience of an external world and introspective reflection upon elements of our consciousness. Concepts alone are simply insufficient alone in offering a legitimate foundation for philosophical reflection.

Schopenhauer argues that concepts, such as "essence, being, substance, perfection, necessity, reality, finite, infinite, absolute, ground," which are often used by philosophers when attempting to construct metaphysical

systems, should not be considered as a priori sources of philosophical cognition for they are,

by no means primordial, as if fallen from heaven, or even innate; rather, like all concepts, they too were derived from intuitions and since . . . they do not contain the merely formal elements of intuition but instead contain more, they presuppose empirical intuitions: therefore nothing can be drawn from them that empirical intuition did not also contain. (WWR2, 199–200)

As part of his critique of Kant, Schopenhauer distinguishes between two competing philosophical approaches: a legitimate “science *in* concepts, drawn from intuitive cognition” and an illegitimate “science *from* concepts” (WWR1, 537), which seeks to use concepts as a foundational intellectual source for philosophy apart from immediate experience. The problem with such an approach, Schopenhauer argues, is that our general concepts do not capture all that is expressed in our experience. By tracing all elements of our experience of the world back to concepts of the understanding, Kant assumes falsely “that the essential and lawlike features of abstract cognition furnish us with all the strings that set the colourful puppet show of the intuitive world into motion before our eyes” (ibid.). There are aspects of our immediate experience of things that are simply lost through the abstracting process of reflection. By failing to properly investigate the relation between intuition and reflection properly, Kant assumed that abstract cognition offers an unproblematic image of the world, whereas intuitive cognition is actually “altered and rendered somewhat unfamiliar by taking on its (reflection’s) own forms” (WWR1, 538).

While philosophy can go on later to consider concepts and the way in which the mind constructs and manipulates them, ‘first philosophy,’ as an initial philosophical response to the need for metaphysics, properly focuses upon the nature of experience itself, that is, “the medium in which *experience in general* presents itself, along with the form and the make-up of the same. This medium is representation, cognition, hence the intellect. For its sake, every philosophy must commence with examination of the cognitive faculty, its form and laws, as well as their validity and limitations” (PP2, 19). Schopenhauer argues that such philosophical reasoning leads to a system of metaphysics insofar as it approaches nature as “a given but somehow conditioned appearance in which a being distinct from itself, which accordingly would be the thing itself, presents itself” (ibid.). The problem with a Kantian ‘science from concepts’ is that it does not attempt to capture how our immediate experience of nature and ourselves can point to something beyond it (as discussed in the previous chapter). It simply assumes that our conceptualising

reason can give us all we need to reflect philosophically upon the world, which Schopenhauer argues is not the case.

As we saw previously, the consideration of the nature of experience inevitably leads to the realisation that our outer experience presents us with a world of appearance that is ultimately a manifestation of something more fundamental, which we may be able to gain an inkling of both through consideration of aspects of our experience of ourselves and of nature at its various levels, synthesising whatever insights are gained into a picture of reality from a higher standpoint. In this way, “[metaphysics] seeks a closer acquaintance with this thing in itself, partly by means of bringing together outer and inner experience, partly by achieving an understanding of the total appearance by means of discovering its meaning and context” (ibid.). So, true philosophical reflection and insight always takes place at the level of experience (either through the objective or subjective viewpoints considered earlier), using as its organ our immediate intellectual apprehension of its nature and content, before conceptual resources come into play.<sup>7</sup>

Schopenhauer’s assumption of the copy principle offers a deeper explanation of why philosophical reflection at the conceptual level falls short of the clarity of simple intuitive reflection. He argues that concepts are “obviously and undeniably mere abstractions of what is intuitively cognized, resulting from arbitrary abstraction from, or dropping of, some qualities and keeping others” (PP1, 30). Due to the arbitrary and artificial nature of the process of constructing concepts, they will always lose something of any truthful reflection that is garnered through intuition: as “*non-intuitive* representations,” they “never have an *immediate* relation to the *essence and being in itself* of things, but only a *mediated* one” (ibid.). The secondhand, constructed nature of the content of concepts sets them apart from the essence of things that is potentially revealed directly in intuition. However, as it is some cognition of the essence of things that we are trying to achieve in our philosophical reflections, concepts will inevitably fall short in this regard.

In addition, philosophical reflection must not merely take place on the conceptual level due to Schopenhauer’s belief that it should have a practical impact upon the individual, in addition to revealing metaphysical truths: “Philosophy must have its source, just as art and poetry, in the intuitive apprehension of the world; and in the process, no matter how much the head has to maintain primacy, it must not stroll along so cold-bloodedly that in the end the total human being, with heart and head, is not brought into action and shaken through and through” (PP2, 9). Schopenhauer argues that philosophical reflection that remains at the conceptual level simply cannot have the impact upon the individual that it could have, namely, answering the need for metaphysics by offering a form of consolation.

This leaves philosophical literature in a difficult position, though, insofar as its role is to motivate the reader to try to achieve philosophical intuitive insight for themselves. The communication in concepts that takes place through the reading of philosophical literature is unable to be directly motivating, as well as being limited in its communication of intuitive insights. The manner in which philosophical literature can overcome these limitations to some extent, in order to have a positive impact on the reader, will be discussed later in the chapter.

Not all individuals will be able to take a full part in this philosophical community of concepts, as they will have a relative lack of the key ability to mediate between intuition and concepts. Schopenhauer argues that a superior mind has a more thoroughly developed ‘power of judgement,’ which he glosses as the “subjective [condition] of knowing immediately true propositions” through the “translation of what is intuitively cognized into abstract cognition” (PP2, 24). While ordinary minds are able to achieve this transition with a limited degree of success, “[minds] with the power of judgement . . . possess the capacity of transitioning from what is intuited to what is abstract, or to what is thought, to a much higher degree” (PP2, 24–25). A consequence of this is that a broader range of immediate, or ‘evident’ truths are available to such superior minds, in that they are more adept in translating intuitive cognition into abstract cognition, including grasping the more complex connections that can hold between propositions.

While superior minds can hold a wider range of evident truths in virtue of their more highly developed power of judgement, ordinary minds are able to believe these same truths but only with a “weaker, merely mediate conviction” (PP2, 25), having to rely on other authorities for their justification in these beliefs, and largely unable to check their beliefs against the true intuitive basis of these judgements. In this way, there is a sense in which ordinary minds are cut off from secure philosophical judgements, having to rely in an uncertain manner upon the authority of others in order to garner some kind of philosophical insight. It is to superior minds that humankind as a whole has to look to as a source of philosophical reflections, and even then, ordinary minds will never be able to fully ascertain the insights that are communicated to them. It is this underlying gap in intellectual ability that ultimately explains why most individuals have to rely upon the allegories of religion to meet their metaphysical need to some extent, while a few superior individuals can truly engage in philosophical reflection.

The importance of the transition between the intuitive and the abstract, as well as the epistemic primacy of the intuitive, is emphasised by Schopenhauer when we states that “[not] only is all *evidentness* intuitive . . . but so too is all true and genuine *understanding* of things” (PP2, 51). Further, he argues that “[in] order to comprehend something really and truly . . . it is required that

one grasp it intuitively and obtain a clear image of it, if possible from reality itself but otherwise by means of imagination” (ibid.). Put simply, you cannot fully understand something without being able to reflect clearly upon it at the level of intuition, with abstract concepts being insufficient for the task: “merely abstract concepts of a thing do not yield a real understanding of it, though they make it possible to talk about it” (ibid.). Even though language in the use of “countless figurative expressions” attempts to “trace all that is abstract back to something intuitive” (ibid.), it will always fail in this attempt as language is unavoidably constructed out of abstract concepts.

His appeal to the notion of being able to picture something from reality or imagination, as seen above, reveals that Schopenhauer’s attribution of epistemic primacy to intuition is linked to an imagistic model of what it is to fully understand or comprehend something: “For in our heads images arise . . . These images alone are what is immediately known to us, what is given” (PP1, 3). This model is further implied when he states that, even “what is too big or too complicated to survey with one glance must be pictured intuitively to oneself either partially or through a surveyable representative, in order to truly comprehend it. That which eludes even this strategy, however, one must seek to make graspable through an intuitive image and simile” (PP2, 51). Following Berkeley (see the critique of abstract ideas in the *Principles*—esp. 1871, 141–42), Schopenhauer seems to assume that concepts cannot be abstract representative images of a given type of thing, and so will always fall short in terms of offering an intellectual object that can provide complete comprehension of something. Fully grasping something in an intellectual act can only occur in intuition.

Schopenhauer’s understanding of the relation between the intuitive and the abstract that we have been considering decisively shapes how he views the role of the philosopher. He states that the genuine philosopher should be “[drawing] from the primal well that is intuitive cognition,” and partly this involves ensuring that they “keep a focus on things themselves, nature, the world, life” (PP2, 52). The philosopher, to tap into the genuine insights found through intuition, should always remain focused on their immediate, individual experience of things, rather than on concepts, which are often from second-hand sources, communicated through language, and can never fully capture the potential power of intuition. As part of their focus on their own immediate experience, the philosopher should not rely too much on others, including philosophical texts from the past: they should,

not make books the texts of [their] thoughts; [they] should also always test and check all their ready-made and handed-down concepts, therefore using books not as sources of knowledge but instead only as an aid. For what they provide [is obtained] only second hand, and most often already somewhat falsified; it



is after all only a reflection, a counterfeit of the original, namely the world, and rarely was the mirror perfectly clean. On the other hand nature, reality, never lies. (ibid.)

The philosopher *can* use philosophical texts as an aid to their individual reflection on their immediate experiences, as long as such scholarship does not *replace* such reflection. Intuition is to be trusted as a good guide to the way things are, and with a lack of suspicion that would be foolish if applied to our reception of the thoughts of others.

Nevertheless, to the extent that we should use philosophical texts to aid our reflection, again it is necessary to gain the widest viewpoint possible, this time upon the thoughts of the philosopher in question. Due to the limits of language and communication, it will be difficult to quickly glean, through reading their works, some sense of the insights that a philosopher might aid us to achieve. As such, we will have to be patient, perhaps ensuring that we read all the texts written by that philosopher on a variety of subjects, maybe even repeatedly, to ensure that we become as intimately acquainted with that mind as much we can, and “get to know the essence of their doctrines in authentic and unadulterated form” (PP1, 35). It is for these reasons that Schopenhauer recommends that we read his works repeatedly, and enjoins us to read all his works, even the minor ones, insofar as each of his books “[cast] its lights on everything I think and write . . . [giving us] some further illumination from everything that emanates from my mind” (PP1, vii). Such recommendations on the part of Schopenhauer are not (just) an expression of his arrogance, but a part of his underlying model regarding the nature of philosophy and its communication.

### THE POSSIBILITY OF INTUITIVE INSIGHT

However, one question we are left with is how a philosophical system can spill out of an intuitive insight, such that a sense of the wrongness of the world and the illusory nature of the principle of individuation (i.e., the space-time continuum that forms the fundamental framework for our everyday experience) can be conceptualised into a complex metaphysical system, namely, the metaphysics of will. To grasp how this might work, it is worth briefly considering the case of the cogito (the thought that ‘I am, I exist’), which plays an important role as the fundamental starting point of Cartesian philosophy.<sup>8</sup> As Hatfield notes (see 2003, 116–17), there are a few options open to scholars who wish to state the exact manner in which the cogito acts as a basis for the rest of Descartes’s philosophy. For Descartes, the cogito is a non-inferential judgement grasped immediately by the intellect, which then

can be used to build up a new system of knowledge from secure foundations, due to the certainty of the cogito as a clear and distinct perception in our immediate consciousness. The two most interesting interpretive options, for our purposes, with regard to the role of the cogito in relation to the rest of the Cartesian philosophy are the ‘foundationalist’ and ‘systematicity’ views.<sup>9</sup>

On the most persuasive version of the foundationalist view, as Hatfield explains, the cogito forms part of a set of clear and distinct perceptions, which the individual can be immediately aware of in their own consciousness, which act as a basis for all further metaphysical claims:

[this] would downplay the claim of self-existence in the *cogito* reasoning in favour of the meditator’s immediate awareness of her own thoughts. The entire set of such thoughts would serve as the foundation for all other knowledge. Descartes would have the meditator move from incorrigible knowledge of her own mental states to knowledge of the rest of the world. (ibid.)

A related view to this is the systematicity interpretation, according to which, “the *cogito* conclusion would come already implicitly linked to other knowledge” (Hatfield 2003, 117). According to such an interpretation, the cogito has an inbuilt inferential structure, such that further judgements can be drawn out of it: we could, for example, consider the presuppositions required to make the intuitive leap from the fact that there is thinking, to the conclusion that there exists a thinking thing, as a post factum rationalisation of the insight. In addition, Hatfield states, “[perhaps] other conclusions, not required for the *cogito* conclusion itself, might be reached simply by considering what is presupposed in thinking of one’s mind” (ibid.). On this reading, the cogito can be interpreted as the nexus of a new system of knowledge, not only offering inbuilt inferential implications as a foundation-stone, but also acting as a model by which we can, by the immediate awareness of our own intellect, come to new realisations about ourselves and the world around us.

Such an interpretation of the cogito allows Descartes to present it as an inference, along the lines of,

P1: I am thinking.

P2. Whatever thinks exists.

C: I exist,

while at the same time claiming that the cogito is grasped in a single act of intuitive insight. The presentation of the cogito as an inference, from which further premises can be drawn, is merely a later methodological rationalization of a thought which is “inferentially complex and contains an implicit major premise, but . . . is grasped in a single intuitive act of thought” (Hatfield

2003, 112). I argue that we could potentially find in Descartes's use of the cogito, as a nexus for a new system of knowledge, a model with which we can understand the role of key intuitive insights in Schopenhauer's account of the process from intuition to conceptualization with regard to the metaphysics of will.

Certainly, Schopenhauer does not think that metaphysical insight will act as the foundation of all knowledge in the manner of the cogito: he has the apparatus of Kantian transcendental idealism, with his analysis of the principle of sufficient reason, and a form of concept-empiricism, already in place, with the result that he has a fully worked-out epistemology, without the need for a foundation-stone in a single intuitive act. Further to this, Schopenhauer's use of the objective standpoint, which we considered in the previous chapter, points away from considering key intuitive insights in Schopenhauer's system in analogy with the foundationalist interpretation of the cogito. It will therefore only be worth considering a potential systematicity interpretation of Schopenhauer, namely, approaching intuitive insight as a basis or nexus for the metaphysical system of will.

I argue that it may be potentially illuminating, given Schopenhauer's commitment to the intuitive basis of genuine metaphysical insight and concept-empiricism, to conceive of the conceptualisation of the metaphysics of will as arising from immediate intuitive apprehension which has the kind of inbuilt inferential structure that the structuralist reading attributes to the cogito. Though elegant in many ways, Schopenhauer's system does contain a fair amount of complexity, encompassing metaphysics, a philosophy of nature, aesthetics, ethics, and so forth. Thus, it may be helpful to construe the genuine metaphysical insights that Schopenhauer claims underlies all worthwhile philosophy as acting as the nexus around which a system can be built, grasped in a simple mental act, and yet containing an implicit inferential structure which can give rise to the various aspects of Schopenhauer's philosophy.

A similar reading of metaphysical insight in Schopenhauer's philosophy to that found here is offered by Gardner, who states that, while the principle of sufficient reason acts as a constraint on what we can cognize, Schopenhauer nevertheless "believes himself to have discovered in the experience of willing a *rift* in the fabric of the world as representation, an item *within* experience which testifies to the existence of an extra-representational domain or other aspect of the domain of representation" (2017, 22–23). As we have seen, Schopenhauer argues that we can identify a certain fact of consciousness which itself points towards a supersensible domain, such that we can potentially think of it or express something about it. Gardner points out that such a fact of consciousness cannot "be inherently conceptualized in the same manner as perception, for if it were then it would represent an *object*,

in accordance with the [principle of sufficient reason]" (2017, 23), and thus if we are to articulate such a revelation at the conceptual level, we must bring concepts that we already have to that experience, in order to express something about it. We are thereby left in a rather restricted epistemological position:

Certainly we can think that this experience—of volition or hedonic affect—is something which has *nothing in common* with representations structured by the [principle of sufficient reason], but what we cannot do, with the conceptual resources Schopenhauer allows us, is move from this wholly negative characterization to any positive determination. (ibid.)

However, Schopenhauer clearly thinks that we can say something positive regarding this fact of consciousness, and what it may point towards in terms of metaphysical insight: otherwise, his philosophy (as the metaphysics of will) would be left with very little of the substantial claims it makes. As such, Gardner states that,

one alternative remains. If we cannot get the experiential datum to speak by bringing concepts *to* it, then it must speak for *itself*. That is, in order to extract anything positive from volitional experience, Schopenhauer must affirm that the experience contains, or makes provision for, its own conceptualization—it *tells us* what its nature is. (ibid.)

So, the fact of consciousness itself, which Schopenhauer identifies as the key part of consciousness which points away from itself, potentially leading us to cognition of something of the supersensible realm, has a complex structure, such that it has inbuilt content that can aid us in its conceptualization after the experience in question. The fact of consciousness has a "self-intimating quality," appearing to us as incongruous with regard to a potential relation with the principle of sufficient reason, and "it presents itself as *more primitive* than representation" (ibid.), that is, as underlying an illusory world that immediately appears to us. In this way, Gardner's interpretation is an interesting way in which we could seek to spell out the manner in which intuitive insight has an inbuilt inferential structure, insofar as we can reflect upon what the incongruous nature of the fact of consciousness involved might mean for the essence of the world.

This model of the cogito as a nexus of philosophical reflection may therefore provide a useful template for coming to understand how Schopenhauer may conceive of an entire metaphysical system spilling out of a single intuitive apprehension. On this view, the role of the philosopher is to systematically spell out, at the abstract level, the inferences of this core intuitive insight, and then convey these ideas to others as persuasively as possible in

language. It is then up to the reader to use these abstract ideas to provoke their own philosophical reflections. We will consider the relation between philosopher and reader in this process of shared reflection, as well as some of the ways in which the philosophical writer can more successfully convey their ideas, in more detail in the next section.

## THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE READER

Given the limits of language and the intuitive basis of true philosophy, which we have been exploring in this chapter, the philosopher and their philosophical reader are left in a difficult position.<sup>10</sup> How is the philosopher to communicate their philosophical thoughts through such an imperfect medium, and how is the reader to retrieve such thoughts, which must of necessity be communicated in language?

The process of philosophical communication, as Schopenhauer understands it, is in fact not as simple as all that. Due to the limits of communication, the reader simply cannot retrieve philosophical thoughts from language in a direct way, insofar as they need to come to the ideas themselves, having been prompted or at least shown the way by their ‘philosopher-guide.’ Schopenhauer explicates what he has in mind through a comparison with the relation of communication between a poet and their readers, writing that “[the] *poet* brings images of life, human characters and situations before one’s imagination, sets all this in motion, and leaves it to each person to think with these images as far as one’s power of mind reaches” (PP2, 5). When one engages with poetry, Schopenhauer argues that the poet does much of the work for you in actively bringing to you the ideas that they wish to convey. The situation with the philosopher is analogous but different, in that “[they do] not bring life itself [in the manner of the poet], but instead the finished thoughts abstracted from life . . .; now he requires that his reader think just this way and just as far as he himself. In this manner his public becomes very small” (ibid.). The role of the philosophical reader, then, is much more active than that of the reader of poetry because the philosopher is limited to conveying philosophical ideas at the level of abstraction (rather than the imaginative images of the poet).

However, as we have seen, something gets lost in translation on the way to abstraction, and so true philosophical thoughts cannot be directly communicated. The only way to lessen the difficulties posed by these limitations is for the reader to take an active stance towards the philosophical text, by attempting to think in the same way as the philosopher. As only a limited readership will be able to achieve this (they need to be from that small proportion of humanity that is capable of true philosophical reflection), then

such philosophical texts will only be able to have a decisive impact on a few people. The ideal philosophical reader will, in at least some obscure and limited sense, be able to take what is communicated at a conceptual level and actively engage with it, such that they can ‘read back’ to the intuitive basis underlying it, which is the foundation of true philosophical reflection. Such an inference will of course be very imperfect and liable to error, yet it must be undertaken actively by the reader to attempt to achieve the same intuitive insights as the philosopher. The philosophical reader must also be willing to spend a long time reading texts sensitively and reflecting upon the metaphysical claims put forward, so that they can “understand it fully [and] go into it deeply” (DA, 7), without falling into the trap of reading statements out of context and potentially seeing contradictions where there are none (as such, the philosophical reader will need to bear in mind the structure of the work as a whole, understanding how the parts of the work fit together and advance the claims made, which may be behind Schopenhauer’s exhortation to read his works at least twice).

The limits of what can be learned from others, particularly in a philosophical context, and the need to focus on the immediate facts of experience available to the individual, is a topic that was introduced to Schopenhauer in 1811 through his attendance at lectures given by Fichte.<sup>11</sup> As App states, Schopenhauer appears to have been greatly struck by the Fichtean notion of the ‘flash of evidence,’ a “[moment] of elation [with regard to philosophical realization] when the sun’s rays suddenly break through the clouds and the thick haze clears” (2014, 72). We find this interesting passage in Schopenhauer’s lecture notes, which prefigures his later notions of intuitive insight and the primacy of the subjective standpoint: “There is that flash of evidence, but only where the domain of true knowledge rises above all experience . . . The moment may come to a few, to the genuine philosophers” (MR2, 25).

With regard to our interest in the limits of language and communication, Schopenhauer crucially notes that the ‘flash of evidence,’ which is only available to genuine philosophers, cannot be gained by reading philosophical texts, or listening to the discourse of their lecturers, but through their own devices alone:

The purpose of teachers and books is that this truth once found may not be lost but, once found, may be handed down and remain for all time the property of the human race. That the pupil nevertheless perceives the truth through that flash of evidence and thus arrives at true knowledge, is merely his own work and cannot be brought about by the teacher. Therefore if the pupil has grasped it, he retains it for ever. If it became clear to him only at the moment when it was communicated to him and it again slipped from him immediately afterwards, then the

evidence tried to break through, but was not yet able to do so. Of course, the words . . . may have been stamped on his mind, but for him they are lifeless and are not knowledge. (MR2, 26)

We can see in these early lecture notes a view of the limits of philosophical education which Schopenhauer would later adopt. Philosophers naturally want to preserve their insights in a more durable form so that it can be transmitted to others. They will therefore inevitably want to teach others and preserve their thoughts as well as they can, in the philosophical literature they produce. However, genuine philosophical insight cannot be garnered simply from reading such texts, even if the individual knows the main claims of a metaphysical system, so that they can pass them on to others. Without having achieved the underlying intuitive insights for themselves, such words will remain ‘lifeless,’ any grasp of the truth underlying the system will be fleeting, and they cannot make a claim to genuine metaphysical knowledge. Thus, it is up to the individual themselves to gain genuine, long-lasting intuitive insight apart from their philosophical education and reading of philosophical texts.

However, there is clearly something that the philosophical writer can do in order to aid the reader in shifting from the level of abstraction to the intuitive. In a letter from 1857, Schopenhauer briefly discusses the eleventh-century Jewish philosopher Solomon ibn Gabirol, having been introduced to his thought at the instigation of David Asher. He accepts that Gabirol “can certainly be seen as [his] predecessor, since he teaches that the will is all and does all in everything” (DA, 8). On the other hand, he claims that the ontological primacy of will is taught by Gabirol “only *in abstracto*,” and that “his thought is still dull and impoverished” (*ibid.*). The implication of this is that, while Schopenhauer allows a certain overlap in terms of genuine philosophical insight into will, nevertheless he clearly feels that there is something about the way he puts his message across that aids the reader to move away from the level of the abstract to that of the intuitive. In other words, the reader is not entirely on their own when it comes to taking philosophical insight communicated in the abstract back down to the intuitive, or at least retrieving the insights for themselves at the prompting of the message communicated at the abstract level. Presumably, Schopenhauer believes that there is something about the style of the text, the way in which the message is communicated, that means the insight that the philosopher is trying to put across can be communicated in a more effective manner, and this is something that he tries to achieve in his own work.

Schopenhauer’s model for how philosophical texts should be structured is hinted at in his praise of the dialogues of Plato, who, he states, “holds only to his main thought as if with an iron hand, follows its thread, even if it becomes ever so thin, in all of its ramifications, through the labyrinths of the longest

dialogues, and finds it again after all episodes” (PP1, 53). There is a sort of natural flow to the ideal philosophical text as it explores a single thought, with perhaps minor deviations along the way, but nevertheless always returning to that thought, following it ever more deeply as all its aspects are investigated. Thus, there is a strong connection between the style and structure of a philosophical text and the quality of philosophical reflection underlying it.<sup>12</sup> For Schopenhauer, the praiseworthy style and structure of Platonic dialogues are a consequence of genuine philosophical reflection on the part of Plato:

One can tell, before he started writing, he had thoroughly and entirely thought through his subject and had designed an artful order for its presentation. Thus each dialogue is a carefully planned work of art all of whose parts stand in a well-thought-out connection, often intentionally hidden for a while, and whose frequent episodes, by themselves and often unexpectedly, lead back, to the main thought, which is then elucidated by them. Plato always knew, in the full sense of the word, what he wanted and intended. (ibid.)

Plato’s dialogues are carefully designed so as to reveal to the reader, to the greatest extent possible, the insights that he had garnered from his philosophical reflections.

Furthermore, such reflections have been thoroughly explored prior to the planning of the text, such that the ideas underlying it are as clear as possible prior to writing. The text is also knitted together in such a way that all parts are interconnected, though the connection might not be obvious to start off with, and with each part progressively revealing more facets of the single thought underlying the work. The writing of a good philosophical text, then, will be quite self-conscious in its planning: unlike the original philosophical insight itself, it will not come in a ‘flash of inspiration,’ but will be carefully planned and executed after a potentially long process of reflection.<sup>13</sup> Such an account of the ideal approach to writing a philosophical text gives us an insight into Schopenhauer’s understanding of his own philosophical work.

In addition, the philosophical writer must also take into account how they can maximise the persuasiveness of the text, which will of course entail considering the nature of the audience. However, as Trautmann notes, Schopenhauer believes that such reflection (given the privacy of mental states) must begin by being focused on yourself, rather than with considerations regarding the pre-existing attitudes, abilities and character of your audience:

Know the audience. But do not first study *them*. Their minds, veiled in lies, must be guessed through trappings, as the shapes of their bodies through clothes. Rather, since every living thing presents the world’s inner being entire, and beneath diverse exteriors people are much the same, study yourself as a resume



of the human condition. After that, study people in literature. Then look to your audience. (1975, 153)

The persuasive author recognises the difficulty of seeing through the surface of their audience, and thus the only sure ground we have to start with is based in ourselves, though even this may be fraught with difficulty: “Just as our body is covered in clothes, so our mind is covered in lies. Our words, our actions, our entire being are mendacious; and only through this cover can we sometimes guess our true way of thinking, just as the shape of the body through the clothes” (PP1, 447n.). A persuasive writer, then, will have begun their reflections upon how to persuade their audience with a consideration of themselves from the subjective standpoint.

In pursuing this, we must consider what pre-existing assumptions we may have had to overcome in our quest to attain the philosophical insights that we are now attempting to communicate, as well as thinking about what rhetorical strategies would have had the greatest impact upon us. This may involve beginning at the point where your audience already stands, using a combination of conceptual resources and rhetoric to bring them slowly to your point of view (in the manner in which *WWR* prepares you for the revelations of the metaphysics of will by beginning from a widely assumed Kantian starting point). To sum up, as Trautmann states, “Apply what you know about the audience, use rhetoric, start at a point of agreement and move through congenial concept-spheres,<sup>14</sup> and appeal in a vivid style” (1975, 153). We can see such approaches to writing exemplified in the texts of Schopenhauer, confirming the self-conscious manner in which he considered the persuasive impact of *WWR* and other works.

Thus, by considering Schopenhauer’s theory of language and communication, we can come to understand something of how he came to write and construct his texts, as well as a view of his idealised audience. Schopenhauer carefully constructed his texts with an eye to exploring a single thought that is gradually revealed and expressed throughout all aspects of the work. All the parts of the work are organically interconnected and grounded as far as possible in genuine intuitive insight, in order to try to give something of the ‘life’ of poetry to philosophical writing. For our own part, as Schopenhauer’s readers, we need to engage actively and wholeheartedly with his work, reading all aspects of his thought perhaps numerous times in order to grasp, as much as possible, the glimpses of his intuitive insights that have been rendered into abstract concepts. This active readership is required so as to facilitate us in coming to the same intuitive insights ourselves, with its attendant cognitive and practical benefits.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has brought together various reflections related to the topics of language and communication. As we have seen, Schopenhauer reflected deeply upon how philosophy could and should be communicated, in relation to the nature of language and conceptual thought, following the empiricist tradition of Locke, Berkeley and Hume. In addition, connected to the potentially speculative nature of his thought, we have considered his commitment to concept-empiricism, with the connected claim that genuine thought at the conceptual level must be linked to data from intuition. Schopenhauer's account of communication has also brought us to consider his understanding of the nature of the relationship between the philosopher and their readers, what makes a philosophical text clear and valuable, and the extent to which philosophical insight can be communicated. Schopenhauer attributes to the reader an active role, in which the text must be engaged with an eye towards retrieving the original insights underlying the presentation of the metaphysical system from their own, subjective resources.

In the following chapter, we will continue considering the intended impact of Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will upon us—Schopenhauer's readers. In particular, we will consider the developmental structure of his system, and the manner in which we are prepared for the insights that are hinted at through the identification of the thing in itself with will, and the salvific end-point of the negation of the will. Such considerations will have further consequences for our understanding of Schopenhauer's understanding of the possibility of some kind of salvation on both an individual and social level. We will identify the key notion of forms of consciousness as marking various stages on the path to salvation for Schopenhauer, beginning from his very earliest notes.

## NOTES

1. A letter to David Asher from 1855 also reflects Schopenhauer's general antipathy towards philosophical dialogue: "But do not expect me to engage in a controversy, which is something I do not do. I prefer to leave it to my system to justify itself and find its way in the world as best it can" (DA, 1). Elsewhere, he also expresses scepticism regarding the effectiveness of the Socratic method of philosophical method, calling it an "artificially constructed game" (PP1, 47) that could never bring about genuine philosophical insight in others.

2. Schopenhauer states that philosophers should take care to ensure that their philosophical starting point is not at the level of concepts, which happens for example when one attempts to prove the existence of God from the concept of God as a being that necessarily exists (see PP1, 77). We see the empiricist tenor of Schopenhauer's

system reflected in his assumption that the philosophical significance of concepts lies entirely in their source in intuition, and that we should take care with regard to the potential misuse of concepts, including applying them in an illegitimate manner, beyond what is justified with regard to the content gained from experience.

3. Schopenhauer states that we also need to distinguish between a concept and “a mental image . . . used as a *representative of a concept*” (EF, 177), so we are not misled into thinking that concepts can be imagistic.

4. Young correctly claims that Schopenhauer holds to an ‘illiberal’ version of genetic concept-empiricism, which requires that “topics of cognitively significant discourse be, in principle, perceptible” (1987, 23), on the basis that “for every *bona fide* concept, or every element out of which a concept . . . is compounded, there will always be perceptual object which stands to the concept as both instance and source” (1987, 25).

5. As Cartwright notes (2003, 148 n.4), we also know that Schopenhauer had a copy of Locke’s *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, alongside a couple of the empiricist’s political works.

6. Hübscher has dated two sets of early notes on Locke, the first to Summer 1812 and the second to January 1816 (MR2, xxix). The first notes reflect a strong allegiance to Kant: after an attack on Locke’s theory of knowledge as based on the harmony and relation between ideas, Schopenhauer states that, “[compared] with Kant, Locke is shallow, unimaginative, and unreflective” (MR2, 445). However, the tone of the notes on the *Essay* from 1816 is very different: Schopenhauer states that Locke “states perfectly correctly the *difference* between *man* and *animal*,” has an “excellent passage against the concept [of] substance,” gives a “[correct] explanation of *good* and *bad*,” and so forth, though he still strongly rejects the distinction between primary and secondary qualities as “false and badly made” (ibid.).

7. Schopenhauer allows that not all concepts have an empirical origin, in that there are ‘pure concepts’ that derive from the formal part of our intuition, connected to the fundamental elements of the principle of individuation, namely, space, time and causality. However, he maintains that cognizance with regard to such concepts, “far from leading us beyond experience, [give] merely a *part* of experience itself, namely the *formal* part . . . mere form without content” (WWR2, 200). Therefore, all concepts, even pure ones, have significance only insofar as they are connected to experience, and as such cannot be legitimately used by philosophers for mere speculation.

8. Humphrey discusses the place of Schopenhauer’s philosophy in relation to the Cartesian tradition, and argues that Schopenhauer’s departures from both Hume and Kant reveal sympathies with certain aspects of the Cartesian philosophy (see 1981, 211–12 and *passim*). As Humphrey’s paper involves in-depth discussions that touch upon interpretive issues concerning Descartes, Hume, Kant and Schopenhauer (and some of the interpretive positions taken are rather questionable), it would be too much of a diversion to consider this paper in detail here.

9. There is a further methodological interpretation of the cogito, centred on its use as setting a standard for certain knowledge: namely, clear and distinct perception (see Hatfield 2003, 117). There is no such strand of thought in Schopenhauer, so I will leave that interpretive option out of the discussion.

10. Schopenhauer states that, due to the limits of communication, “systems like mine cannot originate from someone else’s idea” (DA, 17), and thus can only be constructed by each individual themselves. However, as we shall see, the philosophical writer can aid their readers to achieve genuine insight to a certain extent.

11. Hübscher discusses the significant impact that attending Fichte’s lectures had upon the young Schopenhauer, after he moved to Berlin primarily to attend these lectures. As we can see in the lecture notes, Schopenhauer “is soon disappointed in his hope to discover in Fichte a philosopher and great intellect,” though he nevertheless does engage positively with certain ideas that Fichte presents: “At first, Schopenhauer finds occasionally a resemblance to his own insights. Above all, he seems to rediscover with Fichte the fundamental impetus for his own philosophizing” (Hübscher 1989, 186–87). A detailed discussion of Fichte’s early impact on key aspects of Schopenhauer’s philosophy is offered by Zöllner (2012), who particularly focuses on the Fichtean influence that is reflected in Book 4 of *WWR*.

12. Schopenhauer attributes the disputatious style of medieval Scholastic texts to their reverence for scripture, which leads to a conflict between reason and revelation that plays itself out in the structure of the text as a disputation (see PP1, 69).

13. Schopenhauer criticises the Neoplatonist Plotinus, for example, on the basis of his apparently haphazard approach to the preparation of writing philosophical texts (see PP1, 62).

14. Here, Trautmann is referring to the Schopenhauerian notion of concept-spheres, through which Schopenhauer describes the possible relations between the scopes of concepts. As Schopenhauer (*WWR*1, 50–2) states, the scope of two concepts can be equal (in the case in which concepts are interchangeable) or they can overlap, the scope of one concept can entirely enclose the other (such as with ‘animal’ and ‘horse’), or it can include (and be exhausted by) the mutually exclusive scopes of other concepts (such as with ‘angle,’ ‘right angle,’ ‘obtuse angle’ and ‘acute angle’). On this model, we can potentially construct an account of persuasion using the notion of overlapping or enclosing concepts, giving us the manner in which we could potentially move through small steps from one point of view to another.



## Seeking Better Consciousness

This chapter focuses on the question of the wider aims of our intellectual endeavours, as far as Schopenhauer is concerned: In other words, what is the highest thing that philosophy can help us to achieve? We have seen already that philosophy is intended to offer a more direct explanation of things, in light of our need for metaphysics, through both its exploration of the self and nature. However, the operations of philosophy are somewhat limited by its communication in language, which is tied to a level of conceptual thought that is unable to fully capture the materials that form the intuitive starting point for true philosophical reflection. As mentioned earlier, philosophy is not just borne of a need for explanation, but also for consolation and even salvation. In the following discussion, I want to explore the link between philosophy and Schopenhauer's account of the salvific quest for the attainment of a higher or 'better' form of consciousness.

*The World as Will and Representation* begins with the key claim of the ideality of the world, a fact which many may not realise, but is self-evident (as Schopenhauer thinks) as soon as we grasp it. Schopenhauer then moves on to the familiar territory of the prevalent Kantian philosophy. After a seemingly straightforward examination of Kantian epistemology, we are encouraged to reflect upon the pain and suffering that permeates the world of our experience and characterises our lives within it. Further, we discover that an aspect of our inner life, the direct experience of our own willing, might hold the clue for an explanation of the world, bringing together inner and outer experience in such a manner that our cognition may begin to touch upon that which lies beyond our experience. At this point, though we may be theoretically better off (in that we have gained some genuine metaphysical insight into the nature of things), we are still trapped in the cycle of willing that will only ever bring pain and frustration to our lives.

However, at the next stage in the realisation of the theoretical and practical import of the metaphysics of will, Schopenhauer begins to point towards various means of escape we may explore from our painful willing, even if

such means may only be temporary. He speaks of our experience of the beautiful and of the sublime, as well as a potential cognitive insight that pierces through the principle of individuation to such an extent that the individual involved undertakes genuinely compassionate actions, overriding the selfishness that is natural to all of us. These means of escape are characterised not only by the nature of the objects of the experience, and the concomitant changes to the subject that take place, but also by a progression of a successively more complete unveiling of the essence of the world.

With aesthetic experience in the lower arts, we merely see through the principle of individuation to the extent that we cognize something of the grades of the will's manifestation (labelled by Schopenhauer as the 'Platonic Ideas'), whereas with aesthetic experience of music, we are able to cognize a copy of the will itself through an even greater breakdown of the principle of individuation. Underlying compassionate actions is a cognition that pierces through the principle of individuation to an even greater extent, such that the individual recognises the suffering of another person as if it were their own.

The progressive aspect of Schopenhauer's presentation of various avenues of escape from the phenomenal realm eventually come to a climax in the end-point of the denial or negation of the will, in which the cognizing individual is able to see through the principle of individuation to such an extent that their will turns away from itself in horror and undergoes a process of negation. In this chapter, we will explore this progressive structure that underlies Schopenhauer's presentation of the metaphysics of will, particularly with regard to its developmental impact upon the individual and the manner in which it touches upon different levels of consciousness available to some individuals. We will see that Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, focused on the development of the individual towards a higher form of consciousness, is established early on his philosophical notes in the notion of the 'better consciousness,' which is later replaced by the denial of the will and the idea of a conflict between the knowing subject and willing subject. However, the underlying metaphilosophy remains the same as Schopenhauer continues to develop his ideas. I argue that we ultimately find a conception of philosophy as a joint enterprise that is shared by all those who can engage in genuine philosophical reflection, and through this avenue, we can be aided to potentially achieve some form of the denial of the will within ourselves.

## BETTER CONSCIOUSNESS

An important notion with regard to beginning our explanation of the developmental aspect of Schopenhauer's philosophy is that of the 'better

consciousness,' an idea which appears in early notes, but not in the published works.<sup>1</sup> Janaway describes better consciousness as,

a state that transcends ordinary experience, allowing human beings to gain access to something timeless and universal, to leave behind their everyday concerns for the individual human being and all its attendant achievements and failings, to find peace from all striving, and enjoy face-to-face cognition of the truest and most permanent aspect of reality. (2009, 2)

Despite it not being included in the published works, Schopenhauer's notes concerning 'better consciousness' give an important glimpse into his underlying conception of the philosophical enterprise, one which changed little throughout his philosophical career. Throughout his works, he continues exploring how such altered states, both in terms of the subject and the way in which objects appear to them, can have a fundamental impact upon the individual, both regarding the kind of cognition that is available to them and the kind of life they lead.

In these early notes, we discover Schopenhauer already reflecting upon the undesirable nature of the world, and the potential need to escape from it. In this regard, he shows the early influence of the *Upanishads* upon his thought. App (2008, 9) notes that Schopenhauer's interest in Asian thought and culture goes back at least to 1811, when, as a student at the University of Berlin, he attended a lecture course on India-related ethnography. Further, he was probably first introduced to the *Upanishads* in the winter of 1813/14, while he was living in Weimar, following the completion of the first edition of *FR* and the granting of his doctorate by the University of Jena. He states that, during this time, he was introduced to the scholar Friedrich Majer, who encouraged Schopenhauer to study the ancient Indian philosophy that would go on to be a key influence on his work (see GB, 261). App (2008, 27) states that it is highly likely that Schopenhauer would have been impressed by Majer's belief that the original, primeval religion was to be found in India, encapsulated in the *Upanishads*, and that this led him to borrow the two-volume set of *Das Asiatische Magazin*, published in 1802, from the ducal library in Weimar (see App 2008, 21). Thus, at the very beginning of the period in which Schopenhauer's thought turns towards developing his metaphysics of will (1814–1818), Schopenhauer is introduced to, and evidently rather taken with, Indian thought.<sup>2</sup>

The phrase 'better consciousness' appears in the notebooks as early as 1812, even before he had begun work on his doctoral dissertation.<sup>3</sup> The note in question concerns morality, with regard to the difference between acting from instinct and acting from reason. In reflecting upon Kant's treatment of



reason in its theoretical and practical employment, as well as the Kantian notion of the moral law, Schopenhauer writes:

The so-called moral law . . . is only a one-sided view of the *better consciousness* taken from the standpoint of instinct. This consciousness lies beyond all experience and thus beyond all reason, both theoretical and practical (instinct). It is not concerned with reason except that, by virtue of its mysterious connexion with this in one individual, it meets with experience, and here for the individual there then arises the choice whether he will be *reason* or *better consciousness*. (MR1, 23)

This passage marks an early departure from Kant, in positing a different kind of consciousness, apart from that examined in the Critical system. Cross notes the deep significance of this aspect of Schopenhauer's philosophy, as it marks the point where he steps decisively away from the intellectual context in Germany at that time in order to consider other traditions, including that of Indian thought: "Consciousness 'can appear otherwise than as subject'—that is, there is a consciousness other than that of the individual subject experiencing the world as object. It is a significant moment in Schopenhauer's thought, for it contrasts strongly with usual Western positions and aligns him with an important feature of Indian thought" (2014, 197). In the note we are considering here, our feeling of the moral law, which Schopenhauer states (contra Kant) is not connected to reason in its practical employment, has something instinctive about it, and as such offers a sign of a better consciousness which can potentially be attained. Schopenhauer also seems to assume that there may be a competitive element between better consciousness and the everyday sort of consciousness tied to reason, in that the individual has to, in a sense, make a fundamental decision between the two.

An important question here is what Schopenhauer means by instinct: he writes that, when instinct motivates a particular action, it is "the rule, given *a priori*, of an action whose purpose may thus be unknown, for the concept of this purpose is not required for arriving at the action" (MR1, 22). Later on, he speaks of instinct as providing data *a priori*, leading to "instinctive action according to a rule without a concept of purpose" (MR1, 23), apart from the *a priori* processes that we might associate with the workings of reason. So, better consciousness is posited as a form of consciousness that is naturally available as a kind of innate ability to the individual apart from the workings of reason, and has an impact upon the behaviour of the individual, such that they appear to be acting according to a certain principle, though without evidence of purpose on the part of the individual (such that the behaviour appears to be instinctive), in contrast to acting on the basis of the workings of reason.

However, though Schopenhauer has said a little about how the better consciousness will issue in a certain kind of behaviour, grounded in a certain kind of *a priori* cognition that appears to be instinctive, he says nothing about what the better consciousness is itself like for the individual who has attained it. Of the individual who ‘chooses’ better consciousness, at the expense of reason, “we positively cannot say anything more about him, for what we say lies in the province of reason . . . we speak only negatively of the better consciousness” (MR1, 23–24). We thus see an early example of Schopenhauer’s concern regarding philosophical reflection and the limits of its communication to others. Due to reason attempting to comprehend something that is a-rational, it inevitably comes into difficulty, such that if it is to try to say anything of the better consciousness, it can only successfully speak negatively of it: what it is not, rather than what it is (along the lines of the *via negativa* approach to knowledge of God, otherwise known as ‘apophatic theology,’ which recognises the limits of human comprehension of God by stating that we can only speak of his attributes and existence by negation<sup>4</sup>). When reason tries to comprehend the better consciousness, it “undergoes a disturbance” (MR1, 24): as theoretical reason is replaced by ‘genius’<sup>5</sup> and practical reason is replaced by ‘virtue,’ it realises that it has come up against a phenomenon that it cannot comprehend.<sup>6</sup> To the individual who is on the cusp of the choice between reason and better consciousness, though, there will be an appearance of the better consciousness “as a commanding law, as an *ought*” (ibid.), one which supplants the usual workings of practical reason.

However, from a theoretical perspective, there is no anticipatory appearance of the better consciousness: “to the extent that the better consciousness tries to supplant theoretical reason, it does not appear to this at all, just because, as soon as such consciousness enters here, theoretical reason is brought into subjection and merely serves it” (ibid.). In this way, Schopenhauer emphasises the radical distance between better consciousness and our ordinary form of consciousness, which is the usual province of theoretical reason:

The better consciousness is separated from the empirical by a boundary without width, by a mathematical line. Often we do not want to see this and imagine rather that it is a physical boundary over which we can wander midway between the two territories and from which we can look at both . . . But it will not work, for as we set foot in the one sphere, to the same extent have we deserted and disowned the other. For every occasion it is not a case of reconciliation and uniting, but only of choosing. (MR1, 120)

As such, though the better and empirical forms of consciousness lie on a ‘border’ in some sense, the attainment of one is exclusive of the other, in that the individual is able to achieve an entirely different sort of experience, and any

language or concepts bound to the phenomenal realm will be useless due to the radical nature of their separation. The better consciousness will therefore always remain something of a mystery for those of us do not achieve it and instead choose to remain with the workings of reason, though an inkling of it can be gained through the feeling of a commanding law.

Thus, we see here, in an early form, certain philosophical ideas which reveal an underlying metaphilosophy, one which remains consistent through Schopenhauer's philosophical works. Schopenhauer is interested in the possibility of attaining other forms of consciousness, which have a far-reaching impact upon the individual and their behaviour. Due to the limits of what reason can comprehend, we can say little of what the attainment of better consciousness is like, and so we must look to clues (such as the feeling of the moral law, in this instance) to gain at least some awareness of the better consciousness, and thereby speak negatively of what it may be like. Of course, one major detail that is missing here, which would be added later on, is the internal conflict within the individual will connected to the possibility of achieving other forms of consciousness (whereas, here, the conflict is posited as one between reason and better consciousness<sup>7</sup>). Indeed, the lack of the metaphysics of will leads Schopenhauer, in a note from 1813, to allow us to "use the expression *God* symbolically for that better consciousness itself or for much that we are able to separate and to name" (MR1, 44), something that he would not allow later on, when will is identified as the best label for that which is the essence of the world as it appears to us.

Elsewhere in these early notes, Schopenhauer equates "the appearance of *the better consciousness*" with "sharing in the *peace of God*" (MR1, 113), and speaks of better consciousness "[lifting] me into a world where there is no longer personality and causality or subject and object" (MR1, 44), which are fundamental features of the world of our everyday experience. Schopenhauer is clearly interested in the idea of attaining a higher state of consciousness, along the lines of Christian mystics, who are able to find 'peace' in a union with God away from a world mired in sin. Cross has noted the parallels between Schopenhauer's 'better consciousness' (alongside its later counterpart, 'the negation of the will') and key ideas from Indian philosophy, in that they have,

much in common with the ineffable final reality of Indian thought, whether this is described in positive terms as the *atman* of Hinduism or in negative terms as the 'blowing out' (*nirvana*) or 'emptiness' (*sunyata*) of Buddhist teaching. Both the Self or *atman* and the better consciousness are ineffable, blissful, untouched by empirical experience, and as the innermost kernel of our true being survive death. (2013, 204–5)

Following these parallels from Indian thought, the attainment of the better consciousness is connected to a fundamental change in the individual themselves: to attain the better consciousness, “it is necessary that man, this frail, finite and transitory being, be something quite different, that he become aware of himself no longer as a human being at all, but as something quite different” (MR1, 113). Thus, part of the attainment of the better consciousness is, in a sense, leaving behind our existence as an individual human being. We become aware of ourselves in a different manner, potentially as part of something that is infinite, and not subject to the transitory nature of the world around us.

Schopenhauer sees the attainment of such a state in salvific terms, in that our existence in this world necessarily brings with it great suffering. Due to the ultimately illusory nature of the world, though, it is possible that we can remove the illusion and thereby escape from it: “For insofar as he is alive and is a human being, he is doomed not merely to *sin* and *death*, but also to *illusion*, and this *illusion* is as real as life, as real as the world of the senses itself, indeed it is identical with these (Maya of the Indians)”<sup>8</sup> (MR1, 113–14). We receive a confirmation here of the influence of Indian thought, due to Schopenhauer’s reference to the ‘Veil of Maya,’ which we might think of as equivalent to the ‘veil of perception,’ though linked with a falsification thesis. Berger states that Schopenhauer’s understanding of Maya, as it is developed in the notebooks, stems from Advaita Vedanta,<sup>9</sup> which takes it as both “an epistemological category of falsification and an existential fetter that causes human beings to comport themselves towards others and toward the world as a whole in an ethically pernicious way” (2004, 63). Thus, in the notion of Maya, Schopenhauer finds an idea, with impressive historical credentials, that brings together a picture of an illusory world with moral questions concerning one’s attitude towards the world, and the kinds of behaviour that manifest themselves in it: The practical and theoretical are thus intertwined. Berger explains that Maya brings with it a multifaceted notion of illusion, beyond that of the merely epistemological: “Epistemologically, maya entails an erroneous perception of things and a fallacious assessment of their nature; axiologically, it is the inauthentic valuation of world and other; metaphysically, it is the mere phenomenal appearance of a noumenal reality; and ethically, it leads to an unjustifiable alienation of others from self” (ibid.).

The idea of Maya, then, exemplifies the Schopenhauerian theme of seeing the world in an illusory manner such that it brings with it a number of (undesirable) practical implications: the world as appearance is not the world as it actually is in its essence, it leads us to have false beliefs about how the world is in itself, and this leads us to value others incorrectly, in that we end up viewing them from an overly individualised, egoistic perspective. As a result, we are led to act towards others in an immoral manner, and we may

erroneously feel ‘cut off’ from others, when in fact that which divides us is illusory.

As we see in a note from 1814, this multifaceted illusion is quickly linked by Schopenhauer to our nature as willing beings, speaking of Maya as “just that willing, that love (for the object), whose objectification or appearance is the world. As the fundamental error it is at the same time, so to speak, the origin of evil and of the world” (MR1, 130). Schopenhauer connects the ‘Veil of Maya’ to our painful cycle of willing: “On [Maya] are based all our desires and cravings, which are again only the expression of life, just as life is only the expression of illusion” (MR1, 114). So, we already have in these early notes the intertwining of a theoretical realisation through a fundamental change in consciousness, in which we are no longer under the illusion of the world as it appears to us, with the potential practical benefit of being able to escape the painful willing which characterises our existence within the world as representation.

The fundamental nature of the salvation offered here is brought out by Schopenhauer by pointing to the abandonment of the world of illusion, and the ‘giving up of life’ to achieve this better state:

To the extent that we live, will to live, and are human beings, the illusion is truth; only in reference to the better consciousness it is illusion. If peace, quiet and bliss are to be found, then the illusion must be abandoned, and if this is to be abandoned, then life must be given up. This is the serious step, the problem that is insoluble in life and is to be solved only with the help of death, which in itself dissolves not the illusion but only the appearance thereof, namely the body; this is sanctification. (ibid.)

While we are thoroughly enmeshed in the illusory world, it may appear self-evident to us, and it is only when our experience transcends that world in some way that we come to see it for the illusion that it is. For us, the potential avenue of escape may seem illusory, whereas for someone who has attained the better consciousness, they will finally recognise our world as the illusion that it is. As our experience transcends the world, we in effect ‘give up life,’ in that we no longer live as we used to, and we are now free from the painful desires that used to haunt us. However, while we may go a certain distance towards salvation in our lifetime, the salvific journey can only reach its culmination in bodily death.<sup>10</sup>

In line with his conception of the need for metaphysics, Schopenhauer then goes on to consider the impact of suffering in pushing us towards a consideration of the essence of the world itself. One consequence of our experience of suffering is that it encourages a distancing from the world as it appears to us:

The evil we suffer in the world (privation and pain) gives us, whenever it presses on us, a momentary knowledge of what life is (namely sin and death as the appearance of illusion). It shatters the illusion with more or less difficulty according as we are deeply involved in it. In a Lubberland, therefore, there could only be lazy lubbers, in other words were we left involved in illusion. (ibid.)

The cognitive distancing of the individual from the world as it appears to us, in reaction to the experience of pain and suffering in it, brings us a glimmer of the illusory nature of the world and potentially that which underlies it as the essence of the world. The greater cognitive distancing we can achieve in this regard, the more we will be able to see through the illusory principle of individuation. The intertwining of the nature of the object (the world as it appears to us) and that of the subject is emphasised by Schopenhauer's statement that 'Lubberland' will only contain 'lazy lubbers.' As part of the subject-object correlativity thesis (which we will discuss in more detail shortly), the nature of the subject is correlated with the nature of the object, so an individual who is thoroughly enmeshed in the world as representation will be a striving, suffering individual, while an individual who attains the higher level of consciousness will be an individual who no longer wills, and has achieved a peaceful, tranquil existence. Thus, a change in consciousness will be tied to a fundamental change in the individual, and vice versa (and so, the focus on individual development in Schopenhauer's thought is set early on).

Schopenhauer then finishes the note with a remarkable passage on the potential shift to the better consciousness which prefigures much of his later discussion on the negation of the will. He writes that, if we are to leave the world as it appears to us behind,

it must receive a shattering from outside, precursors and preludes of death which is the greatest shattering of the illusion, yet does not in itself dissolve it. Death is not sanctification, but merely furnishes the possibility thereof. For just as with life the illusion is infallibly and inevitably set up, so too is life with the illusion. And whoever persists in willing life will live, although this body dies; for to the extent that there is illusion, its appearance does not fail to come. (ibid.)

Schopenhauer begins this passage by stressing that, though the initial inspiration for metaphysical reflection may lie in our experience of events in the phenomenal realm, the escape from our current form of existence cannot come from that realm but must come from a cognition that sees through the principle of individuation. Also, even at this juncture, Schopenhauer wishes to make a distinction between the death of those who die having attained a higher state, and that of those who do not achieve it. While bodily death grants a final salvation to a few, those who undergo bodily death without achieving better consciousness will, in a sense, continue to be trapped in the

illusory realm. Schopenhauer thus evinces a commitment to at least the persuasive power of the myth of the transmigration of souls.

All the points raised in this highly suggestive note recur in Schopenhauer's philosophy throughout his works, which is remarkable given that it is so early in his career, stemming from 1814. This note shows that the general developmental metaphilosophy underlying his thought was already established, based around the key notion of forms of consciousness: all that he needed to do was build a metaphysics around it, which he would spend the next few years doing as he prepared for the publication of *WWR*.

Kossler also argues for the significance of the notion of 'better consciousness' in relation to Schopenhauer's ongoing approach to philosophy. He states that, from the very early notes we have been considering onwards, we can see that Schopenhauer's "metaphysics is fundamentally ethical and that the physical order of things is proven to be dependent on the moral one, in that the first is nothing more than the mirror or the visibility of the latter" (2009, 83). The 'better consciousness' is explored by Schopenhauer as a means of cognizing the fundamental moral order that underlies the physical:

There is no denying . . . that the concept of better consciousness was, from the very beginning, connected with a thinking based on the contrast between temporal and eternal consciousness that leads to the denial of the will; thus to an ethics which consists in the negation of the world interpreted metaphysically. According to this line of thought morality exists in the affirmation of a better consciousness outside time and in the negation of temporal or empirical consciousness. In consideration of that basic idea, even before the completion of the dissertation, Schopenhauer had established substantial features of the later ethics of the denial of will. (ibid.)

According to Kossler, the notion of better consciousness sets an ongoing theme for Schopenhauer, in that it reveals his ethical approach to philosophy, alongside the desire, from a theoretical perspective, to gain cognition of the essence of the world. The project of finding a better kind of existence for us focuses upon trying to transcend the world in which we find ourselves by adopting a new form of consciousness, with the attendant practical benefits that this will bring about. In this way, we can make sense of Schopenhauer's claim, made around the same time as these notes, that his philosophy "is to be ethics and metaphysics *in one*" (MR1, 59). Through a change in the constitution of consciousness, we may gain cognition of metaphysical truths, including that of an underlying ethical order, with correlative practical benefits such as the gaining of virtue, manifested in compassionate actions in the phenomenal realm.

As part of our understanding of the significance of the better consciousness for Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, the notion of 'mirroring' is also worthy of note, in that our consciousness, and the experiences contained within it, will mirror truths about ourselves and, potentially, the essence of the world itself. As Kossler argues, once Schopenhauer has developed his metaphysics of will, which sees the character of the will being manifested in the world as representation, we can see our world in a new way: "The entire world of [re]presentation is . . . 'the becoming visible' of a will acting through certain characters" (2009, 82). The nature of life within the world as representation can be understood as reflecting the 'intelligible character' of the will that underlies it. The phenomenal realm 'mirrors' its essence, in various ways, such that we can learn more about ourselves and the unity underlying all things: Schopenhauer states that, "Life is only the mirror into which we look not so that it may reflect something, but so that we may recognise ourselves in it, may see what it reflects" (MR1, 99). The fact that we lead the kind of existence we do lead, in this world full of pain and suffering, is a reflection of the kind of people we are (in an analogous manner to the way in which nature points towards its ground or essence by our reflection upon it from the objective standpoint, discussed in chapter 2).

In this regard, we need to consider Schopenhauer's subject-object correlativity thesis, a key feature of his philosophy (indeed, so important that it is one of the first topics of discussion in *WWR1*). In introducing this thesis, he first states that "[there] are two essential, necessary and inseparable halves to the world as representation" (WWR1, 6), namely, subject and object. As part of his commitment to idealism,<sup>11</sup> Schopenhauer states that the subject is "present, complete and undivided in each representing being" (*ibid.*), and is "the support for the world and always presupposed as the general condition of all appearances, of all objects: whatever exists, exists only for the subject" (WWR1, 5). The object, on the other hand, is appearance, "whose form is space and time, and thus multiplicity" (WWR1, 6). As such, there is nothing more to the world as representation than an object for a particular subject:

[a] single such being with its object completes the world as representation just as much as the millions in existence do: and if this single representing being were to disappear, the world as representation would no longer exist. Consequently, these two halves are inseparable, even in thought, because each of them has meaning and exists only through and for the other. Each is present when the other is as well and disappears when the other disappears. They share a common border: where the object begins, the subject ends. (*ibid.*)



The fates of subject and object, then, are inextricably intertwined: there is only object-for-a-subject and subject-for-an-object, with both halves of the representative link gaining their ‘meaning and existence’ through each other.

An important point to make here is that Schopenhauer is going beyond the basic idealist claim that the object, the world as it appears to us, depends upon the subject for its continued existence. Rather, the correlativity thesis holds that subject and object determine each other, such that a change in the subject will necessarily be correlated with a change in the object. The world appears to us in the way it does because of the kind of subject that we are: if we, as subject of cognition, affirm the will, then the world will appear in a certain manner, whereas if we tranquilize the will (and thus there is a change in the subject), the object as it appears to us will undergo a correlated change.<sup>12</sup>

If, for example, we engage in a work of art, such that we enter a genuine aesthetic experience, there is a correlated change in both the object and subject:

it is possible for us to raise ourselves from cognition of particular things to cognition of the Ideas, this can only take place by means of an alteration in the subject that corresponds to and is analogous with that radical change in the whole nature of the object, and by virtue of which the subject, in so far as it has cognition of an Idea, is no longer an individual. (WWR1, 207)

What happens in aesthetic experience is that the subject is able to (at least temporarily) free their cognition from the overwhelming power of the will (“cognition tears itself free from the service of the will so that the subject ceases to be merely individual and now becomes the pure, will-less subject of cognition” [WWR1, 209]), so that there is a concomitant change in the form of their consciousness, with the effect that the world appears to them in an entirely different manner. In this case, they now experience the “levels at which the essence of the will enters representation” (WWR1, 199), rather than the particular spatial-temporal objects of their everyday experience.

Usually, cognition operates in service of the will, and so the form of consciousness we adopt is linked to the interests of the will in “maintaining a creature with diverse needs” (WWR1, 208). The essential forms of our everyday experience, which make up the principle of individuation, namely, space, time and causality, are merely part of our interested way of viewing the world from the perspective of the desires of the will. Through such cognition we only know of the relations between objects, including our own body, “as far as they exist at this time, in this place, under these circumstances, through these causes, with these effects” (*ibid. Ibid.*), which is all the information required to ensure that we are able to meet our various needs and desires. From the perspective of the will and everyday consciousness, we do not

need to know any more of the world as it appears to us, and so this form of consciousness will not reveal anything of the grades of the manifestation of the will as it appears, or regarding the essence of the world itself (or at least, not directly).

To sum up, the nature of the object reveals something of the nature of the subject. If the world is purely seen from an interested perspective, such that we retain the view of the world as falling under the principle of individuation, this reveals that the subject of cognition remains in the service of the will. On the other hand, if another form of consciousness is adopted, and the world appears in a different manner, this shows that some fundamental change has taken place in the individual. Thus, the world, as it appears to us, is a ‘mirror’ of the subject, and if that world is a rather undesirable place, then this does not reflect very well upon us. In a sense, *we get the world we deserve*, as it is the nature of the subject which is correlated with the nature of the object.

Finally, we can see, in a note from 1813, Schopenhauer already seeking to connect the pain and suffering that fills the phenomenal realm with an underlying moral order, one that is revealed to us by a higher form of consciousness:

How can it really surprise that this world is the realm of chance, error and folly that cripples wisdom, that wickedness acts therein with unrestrained violence . . . for indeed this very world (i.e. our empirical, sensuous and rational consciousness in space and time) has its origin only through that which, according to the utterance of our better consciousness, ought not to be, but is the wrong direction from which virtue and asceticism are the return journey and, in consequence of this, a peaceful death is the release. (MR1, 43)

We see here the importance of Schopenhauer’s commitment to idealism, in that the way to escape from a pain-filled world starts from within, through virtue and engagement in ascetic practices. Due to the correlativity between subject and object, a change in subject can bring about a fundamental change in object, to the extent that the world of our everyday experience can be left behind, either temporarily or on a more permanent basis. However, only a peaceful death, following the attainment of the negation of the will, may grant us the most complete escape from the painful cycle of willing.

In this section, we have seen that Schopenhauer, from his very earliest notes, explores the idea of altered states of consciousness as potential sources of insight and consolation. He begins with the notion of a ‘better consciousness,’ which can be seen by others as manifested in an apparent change in character and behaviour. The attainment of this better consciousness offers a kind of salvation in Schopenhauer’s pessimistic world by removing the illusion of individuality and undermining the pull of our painful desires.

Philosophy has the role of exploring this better consciousness, with its underlying insights into the essence of things and its ethical implications, through the important subject-object correlativity thesis: the kind of world we experience reflects the kind of person we are. In Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, ethics and metaphysics are intertwined, as our exploration of consciousness and the world reveals the possibility of an accessible higher ethical order. At this point in his notes, though, Schopenhauer had yet to establish a fully-fledged metaphysics around this central metaphilosophy. In the following section, we will see that as Schopenhauer developed the ideas that would form *WWR1*, the notion of better consciousness was abandoned, but the underlying metaphilosophy remained.

### THE REPLACEMENT OF BETTER CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE METAPHYSICS OF WILL

The argument presented here for the ongoing metaphilosophical importance of the better consciousness for Schopenhauer's thought, reaching throughout his philosophical works, invites questions regarding why the notion is dropped during the preparation of *WWR*. The term 'better consciousness' appears regularly in the early notebooks, and then seems to be abandoned by 1815. The reason for Schopenhauer moving away from this notion is connected to the growing role of willing in his burgeoning philosophical system, as well as his desire to remain within Kantian epistemic limits, while nevertheless making some claims regarding the essence of the world. We have seen, in the notes, that the better consciousness is posited as being in conflict with reason and with empirical consciousness. However, when willing becomes a major part of Schopenhauer's system, it is clear that he feels the conflict is better expressed at the level of the subject, and not between competing forms of consciousness: thus, the conflict, which could potentially deliver the individual from the pain-filled world they live in, becomes one between the 'subject of knowing' and the 'subject of willing,' in that the individual will can become overwhelmed by a certain form of cognition.

The final note that uses the notion of 'better consciousness' is an extended discussion of the physical body as a manifestation of will, alongside connected claims regarding the value of ascetic practices and refraining from egoistic behaviour. Here, Schopenhauer states that the "better consciousness in me, which is often alarmed at the mere affirmation of my body, and thus asceticism as far as death by starvation is possible, cries out in pain if, in affirming my body, I go to the length of denying another's" (MR1, 191). This quotation seems strange, in that, in earlier references to the better consciousness, we find it posited as a state of consciousness that can be adopted

by a subject (either voluntarily or not), whereas here, it is seemingly given a kind of personality, it is 'alarmed' and can 'cry out in pain,' which makes it subject-like. Clearly, Schopenhauer requires something like a subject that can be understood as grounding various forms of consciousness and potentially responding to these forms in various ways, sometimes in conflict with the willing aspect of the self: thus, he moves from a conflict between better consciousness and willing, towards one between the subject of willing and the subject of knowing. We find the potential conflict between subject of knowing and subject of willing first explored in a note from the same period, in which a 'better consciousness'-like state is attained by the individual who becomes "wholly and entirely the *subject of knowing* . . . [who is] absorbed in knowledge, . . . blissfully happy, wholly contented, and nothing can assail [them]" (MR1, 137). Thus, while there is still the notion of a consciousness which is different in kind from the usual everyday form of consciousness, Schopenhauer links its attainment to a change with regard to the relation between the subject of knowing and the subject of willing.

We are still left with the question, though, why the term 'better consciousness' is dropped, at the expense of related notions such as the 'denial of the will.' We can offer two reasons for this: first, given the ineffability of the higher state attained by the saved individual, 'better consciousness' might be too positive a term for something that is officially only subject to negative expression. Given the nature of the fundamental break with empirical consciousness which such an individual undergoes, and the limits of what our language can express about it, it may be unjustified to positively label it even as a form of consciousness, never mind that it is 'better' in some way. All terms which we use to label the higher form of consciousness positively will ultimately fall short, including the identification of it as being 'morally better,' as terms of moral judgement themselves only have legitimate application within the realm of our everyday consciousness. The term 'denial of the will' is less problematic in this sense, because it is a negative term, labelling what the state is not, rather than what it is, namely, a form of existence apart from the former tyranny of the will. Therefore, the term 'denial of the will' allows Schopenhauer to claim more confidently that he is not engaging in speculation with regard to the potential salvation available to human individuals, and that he is not overstepping Kantian epistemic limits, despite having some consideration in his system for that which lies beyond the world as it appears to us.

Cross further notes that the term 'denial of the will' has the virtue, for Schopenhauer, of ensuring that the will remains at the centre of his philosophy, in that, "[had] he left the better consciousness in the positive form we find in the *Manuscript Remains*, it would inevitably have challenged the will for supremacy in his system, with a resulting loss of coherence" (2013, 204).

Thus, with the term ‘denial of the will,’ Schopenhauer ensures that all the major tenets of his system are defined in relation to the will: the will is the foundational notion out of which all else is built up. The term ‘better consciousness’ could have led to giving Schopenhauer’s system an air of dualism about it, with two fundamental principles, and as such, he comes to believe that he can better express both the conflict within and the underlying unity behind his philosophy by the terms, ‘subject of willing,’ ‘subject of knowing,’ and ‘denial of the will.’ The subject of knowing, as a manifestation of the subject of willing, does not lead Schopenhauer into dualism, but instead provides a mirror for the subject of willing to cognize itself and thereby deny itself: thus, the primacy of the will is maintained.

However, this switch does not show an abandonment of Schopenhauer’s underlying metaphilosophy. We are still centrally thinking in terms of a salvific form of consciousness through the idea of the negation of the will. However, the mechanics of how philosophical reflection and moral development lead to this teleological endpoint of the negation of the will still needs exploring. How this process takes place on an individual level is the focus of the following section.

## PHILOSOPHY AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

As we saw in the previous chapter, for Schopenhauer, engaging in true philosophy, such that it has the desired epistemic and practical impact upon the individual, is akin to a journey that is a joint enterprise, with the philosopher as “guide” and “his reader the wanderer” (PP2, 6). Such a motif of partnership between philosopher and reader embarking on a journey *together*, heading for a particular goal, is important for explicating his understanding of the developmental aspect of true philosophy. Schopenhauer states of the two partners that, “if they are to arrive together, then they must depart together, i.e., the author must take his reader up to a standpoint that they certainly have in common [namely] . . . empirical consciousness, common to all of us” (PP2, 6–7). The choice of starting point for any philosophical system is crucial, and it is stipulated that we must begin with the kind of everyday experience of the world around us and ourselves that he labels as ‘empirical consciousness,’ a kind of easily agreed-to, commonly held standpoint that can act as a firm foundation from which perhaps more speculative ground can be explored: “Here then let [the philosopher] take [the reader] firmly by the hand to see how high above the clouds he may reach, on mountain paths, step by step” (PP2, 7). How speculative Schopenhauer wishes to go with us is not altogether clear here, but the intent to take us beyond the everyday in a progressive manner is transparent.

With regard to the impact upon the individual, the ideal effect from a theoretical perspective upon the philosophical reader will be significant indeed: “The philosopher’s work . . . aims to overthrow the reader’s entire way of thinking, and demands of him that he declare everything that he has learned and believed in this genre to be in error, his time and effort lost, and that he must begin anew; at best it leaves a few of the predecessor’s ruins standing, in order to make a foundation of them” (PP2, 6). If we are to take Schopenhauer’s philosophical journey with him, we can expect that our pre-conceived philosophical notions will be left in doubt and ultimately abandoned. We will approach the world in a potentially entirely new way, from a novel standpoint built on new foundations. Schopenhauer does make an interesting proviso, insofar as he allows that some philosophical ideas of the past may be used in this new philosophical system (his use of Kant’s transcendental idealism and Plato’s Ideas comes to mind here), but the emphasis is very much on the novelty of what is being presented and the depth of impact upon the individual that can be attained.

In addition to revealing metaphysical truths, Schopenhauer clearly feels that intuitive insight can have a beneficial impact upon behaviour, whereas “mere moralizing” (WWR1, 434) can only have an effect insofar as it appeals to our self-love, so cannot be truly ‘moral’ development at all. By ‘mere moralizing,’ Schopenhauer is referring to the communication of supposed universal moral principles formulated at the abstract level. While virtue can be gained from cognition, this cannot be “abstract cognition that can be communicated through words” (ibid.), but rather through the kind of intuitive insight that underlies all deep reflection. One reason that Schopenhauer gives for his view on this matter is that genuine virtue cannot be taught, and that one could read about his ethics of compassion at great length without a moral improvement taking place:

[if it] could be taught, [then] the abstract explanation we are giving [in *WWR*] of the essence of virtue and the cognition that grounds it would improve the ethics of anyone who understands us. But this is by no means the case. Ethical lectures and sermons are as little capable of producing a virtuous person as aesthetics, from Aristotle’s onward, has ever made a poet. Concepts are barren when it comes to the true and inner nature of virtue . . . [They] can only be used in an absolutely subordinate way, as tools for elaborating and safeguarding things that we already know and have resolved upon. (WWR1, 434–35)

Schopenhauer claims that what can be achieved through ‘moralizing’ at the conceptual level is severely limited, to the extent that it cannot engender genuine moral development. Rather, at the very most, it can help a group of people who have already achieved moral insight for themselves at the

intuitive level to conduct moral discourse as an attempt to clarify what genuine virtue requires (“The only value dogmas have for morality is that they provide a scheme or formula for virtuous people whose cognition is already derived from elsewhere” [WWR1, 435]), to guard against moral backsliding, as well as to suggest instances of where virtue has (or has not) been exemplified in a given act. We can only focus upon the actions of an individual, not what intentions or moral principles may lie behind them, and on that basis we have to rely upon an imperfect interpretation and analysis of actions and patterns of behaviour in order to try to express in abstract terms the essence of virtue that may be exemplified (see WWR1, 437).

A further aspect of Schopenhauer’s view that we need to explicate here is his notion of moral development, which ties into his view that abstract cognition cannot bring about virtue. While abstract cognition can have an impact upon our behaviour by presenting us with certain motives, Schopenhauer believes that a transition to virtue takes place at a more fundamental level, in terms of a change in disposition. He states that, “motives can only alter the direction of the will, not the will itself” (WWR1, 435), so that while motives gained from abstract cognition may shape our behaviour, it cannot change the character of the will that is expressed over time in the form of individual acts.<sup>13</sup> Following Kant’s claims in the *Groundwork* (see, for example, the example of the shopkeeper who only charges fairly due to their self-interest in their own reputation—4:397–98) and elsewhere, Schopenhauer argues that observation of someone’s behaviour is not necessarily a good guide to whether or not they have genuine virtue, as the moral significance of a particular action lies in the underlying moral character, which is not directly epistemically available to us: “[All] deeds . . . are just empty images that acquire moral significance only by virtue of the disposition that produces them” (WWR1, 436).

Virtue is only realised by a fundamental change in character on the part of the individual, and so (by elimination, if anything else) only intuitive cognition can be involved. Schopenhauer concludes:

[a] truly good disposition, disinterested virtue, and nobility of mind do not begin with abstract cognition, but do nonetheless begin with cognition—namely, an immediate and intuitive cognition that cannot be reasoned for or reasoned away, a cognition that cannot be communicated, precisely because it is not abstract. This cognition must come from each person, and thus is not truly adequately expressed in words, but only indeed, in actions, in the course of a person’s life. (WWR1, 437)

We can use our observation of the actions of others as a sort of guide for genuine virtue, but nevertheless a genuine change in disposition must be

grounded in intuitive insight, alongside other genuine insights that metaphysical reflection relies upon.

In line with other claims Schopenhauer makes regarding genuine insight, the nature of the intuitive insight linked to a change in moral disposition involves an individual cognizing the unity of things beyond the principle of individuation, which naturally issues in a change of behaviour. Evildoers are caught up in the illusory principle of individuation, not realising that “other people are not just masks . . . entities whose essence is entirely different from his own” (WWR1, 437–38). A person who is just in their actions, on the other hand, shows that “he *recognizes* his own essence . . . in foreign appearances that are given to him as mere representations, and thus rediscovers himself in these other appearances to a certain extent, namely that of doing no wrong, i.e., failing to cause harm” (WWR1, 438). ‘Seeing through’ the principle of individuation reveals that the difference between ourselves and others is ultimately illusory to the extent that as we would not do wrong to ourselves, we should not do wrong to others.

As noted before, such genuine virtue is grounded in a change of willing, and Schopenhauer argues here that the character of the just person reveals “the resolution not to affirm your own will to the point where it negates other appearances of the will by forcing them to serve yours” (ibid.). In a just individual, we see a will whose impact on behaviour is not what it had been before. Thus, the change is not grounded in motives, but at the more fundamental level of a change in the nature of the individual’s willing. Further to this, such a development can proceed to the point where the individual engages in “positive benevolence and beneficence, to loving kindness” (WWR1, 439), though this depends upon the strength of intuitive insight that gives the cognizing subject the means by which the will is brought to deny itself.<sup>14</sup>

With regard to the possible impact of Schopenhauer’s philosophy on the reader, it is important to make some clarifications. First, cognition does not overcome or change the will in any sense. The will is, as far as Schopenhauer is concerned, omnipotent and foundational to all things. So, how can a philosophical system have an impact upon the individual to the extent that they could be inspired to follow the path of denial of the will? Schopenhauer is clear that the negation or denial of the will is something that the will does to itself, in light of the cognition it has gained through the medium of an (ontologically secondary) knowing self. Through an “alteration in cognition,” Schopenhauer states, “the character itself [i.e. the manner in which the will is expressed in an individual] can be fully abolished” (WWR1, 477). This is possible due to the will, as manifested individually within us, becoming cognizant that it ought not to be and thereby “begins turning away from life” (WWR1, 448). As such, the role of Schopenhauer’s philosophy (in light of



the possibility of attaining the denial or negation of the will) is in seeking to inspire in us our own cognition that would bring the will to turn away from life in the manner he describes.

Second, though the negation of the will is only available to a small number of people, it is worth noting that Schopenhauer's philosophy could nevertheless console the reader in a less radical (and effective) manner by inspiring a deeper understanding of the nature of the world in which we live and a realisation that we should not expect too much from life.<sup>15</sup> In light of Schopenhauer's discussion of the effect of reaching old age (which we will examine in more detail later in this chapter), we can see our understanding of his philosophy as, in a sense, making us old before our time insofar as it may inspire us to come to terms with the suffering life we are doomed to lead within the world as representation. Thus, Schopenhauer's work can be read as offering a kind of therapy that is open both to those who can engage in negation of the will, and those who are doomed (for reasons that will remain ultimately mysterious—see WWR1, 478) to fall short.

## PRACTICAL REASON AND THE STOICS

Related to the issue of moral development is Schopenhauer's approach to practical reason. We have seen that Schopenhauer has a broadly empiricist view of the nature and capabilities of reason, with regard to its role in abstraction and manipulation of concepts, and this extends to his view of practical reason. As Julian Young notes:

Against [Kant's conception of practical reason], Schopenhauer wishes to reinstate a conception of practical reason which is, in fact, just Hume's: reason has no role in the determination of ends but is entirely concerned with the calculation of means. The dependence of the rational upon the sensory is as evident in the practical as in the theoretical sphere: just as theoretical reason without intuitions is empty, so practical reason without desires is impotent. (1987, 17)

So, for Schopenhauer, reason is not practical in the sense that it can place us, as individuals, under unconditional obligations. Rather, practical reason is granted a more limited role of choosing means on the basis of the ends that we have already set ourselves. Reason can have an impact upon action insofar as it aids us to decide upon means.

However, reason also has a practical impact in virtue of the intellectual capabilities that it grants to us, beyond those of other animals. Our capacity for abstraction opens out our cognitive sphere beyond the present, such that we can reflect upon the past, and possible futures, as well as places we have

never gone to. Such abstract reflection carries a certain emotional colour, too, in that it will bring a kind of circumspective attitude to the individual: “The panoramic view of life as a whole . . . [can be] compared to a colourless, abstract, geometrical miniature of life’s course” (WWR1, 101). Such a ‘colourless’ view involves a calmer standpoint for the individual to stand upon, from which they can view the world in a less interested way:

human beings always lead a second, abstract life alongside our concrete life. In the first we are subject to all the storms of reality and are prey to the influence of the present: we must strive, suffer and die, just as animals do. But our abstract life, as it appears before us in rational contemplation, is the calm reflection of the first life and the world it is lived in . . . In this realm of peaceful deliberation what had previously possessed us completely and moved us deeply, now appears cold, colourless and strange to the eye: here we are simply onlookers and spectators. (WWR1, 101–2)

Due to the extension of our sphere of cognition by reason, we are enabled to take a new stance towards the world around us, which involves calmly reflecting upon things with ‘equanimity,’ in a manner at least partially removed from the usual interest of the will. Why, however, does such cognition grant us a calmer attitude with which to view the world? Schopenhauer argues that our immersion in the present moment ensures that we are more emotionally involved in the tumult of events as they occur (WWR2, 164). The immediacy of experience from immersion in the phenomenal realm ensures that it will have a greater, disturbing, emotional impact upon us.

Indeed, Schopenhauer ties the occurrence of emotions to the way in which we represent the world: “Every *affect* . . . arises when a representation working upon our will comes so excessively close to us that it blocks everything else out and we cannot see beyond it, which makes us momentarily unable to consider any alternative” (*ibid.*). Thus, if we wish to escape from painful emotions that naturally follow from the kind of world we live in, we must seek to distance ourselves from the present moment, and this is made possible to a certain extent through the abstract cognition made available to us by reason. In its practical employment, reason is able to take us away from the present moment by expanding our sphere of cognition beyond it and so allowing us to gain a wider perspective upon the world. We can see events as part of a wider historical narrative, a tragedy in which all human endeavours ultimately come to naught, and suffering and frustration is to be expected.

Further to this, the world even appears anew to us, in a strange, even puzzling aspect, in that we no longer take its nature for granted and potentially question what takes place in it. The expanded sphere of cognition not only allows us to think of other times and places, but also of other possible ways

things could have been. The possibility of attaining such a calm standpoint has a practical benefit in potentially inuring us, at least temporarily, from whatever great hardships we might face in the present moment:

The equanimity we human beings experience, so different from the thoughtlessness of animals, stems from this second life; it is this equanimity that, after prior deliberation, calm resolution, or acknowledged necessity, allows us to endure coolly something that is of the utmost importance for us, often something quite terrible . . . Here we can really say that reason is expressing itself *practically*: where reason guides deeds, where abstract concepts furnish the motive, where deeds are not determined by individual intuitive representations or the impression of the moment that guide animals. (WWR1, 102)

So, for Schopenhauer, reason has a multifaceted practical impact on the human individual: it is not only the medium for concepts and language, with the result that we can act upon conceptual reasoning, and for selecting means for whatever ends we wish to set ourselves, but it also enables us to gain a more circumspect view of the world from which we can more calmly gaze upon it, away from the tumult of the present moment and the will. The abstract knowledge which reason enables us to have can act as the basis for dispassionate reflection upon ourselves and the world around us, both in terms of what is the case and what might be the case. Crucially, it is what raises us above the animal, allowing us ultimately to reflect philosophically about the world. Practical reason thus has a vital role to play in inspiring the need for metaphysics that forms the basis of our drive towards philosophical reflection. Even though Schopenhauer moves away from Kant's conception of a powerful practical reason, in being able to set its own ends and having a certain essential dignity, he nevertheless still accords a key role to reason in philosophy, and the life of the individual more generally.

Schopenhauer's approach to practical reason can be further illustrated through his account of Stoic ethics and the idealised figure of the 'Stoic sage'.<sup>16</sup> He presents the Stoic sage as "the most complete development of *practical reason* in the true and authentic sense of the word, the highest peak a human being can attain using only reason, where the distinction between humans and animals shows itself most clearly" (WWR1, 103). Despite the plaudits granted to the Stoic sage, the proviso that this is the 'highest peak a human being can attain using only reason' crucially distinguishes this figure from those who attain true metaphysical insight and Schopenhauer's developmental endpoint of the negation or denial of the will. In contrast to virtue attained by those who have seen through the principle of individuation to some extent, Stoic ethics promotes a way of life that focuses on the maximisation of happiness first:

essentially Stoic ethics is not a doctrine of virtue at all, but simply a guide for rational living: its aim and end is the achievement of happiness through peace of mind, and virtuous conduct is included only as it were accidentally, as a means rather than an end. Consequently, Stoic ethics is fundamentally different in both its point of view and its whole essence from ethical systems that insist directly on virtue, such as the doctrines of the *Vedas*, Plato, Christianity and Kant. (ibid.)

There are elements of Stoic ethics that Schopenhauer certainly welcomes, such as the teaching that “happiness can only be assured through inner tranquility and peace of mind . . . achieved through virtue” (ibid.), which parallels the state of mind that we must achieve if we are to attain metaphysical insight, genuine virtue and potentially denial of the will.

However, by focusing on happiness as the primary end, Stoicism shows itself to be ultimately lacking in the kind of metaphysical insight that underlies the metaphysics of will and the ethics of compassion that goes along with it. A genuine insight into the nature of the world would reveal that happiness is not attainable in this world, and thus we must seek to transcend our individuality through our actions, to the point where our experience may even go beyond that of our everyday life. It is the lack of intuitive insight underlying the essence of Stoic thought which leads Schopenhauer to posit the Stoic sage as a figure who has followed the path of practical reason as far as it will take them alone, apart from genuine metaphysical insight. Thus, the Stoic sage is able to garner the benefits available to them by virtue of having a developed practical reason, such as the more circumspective attitude it allows them to take towards the world.

Schopenhauer thus praises Stoicism as “a very valuable and estimable attempt to adapt that great privilege of humanity, reason, to an important and salutary end, namely that of raising us above the suffering and pain that every life encounters” (WWR1, 107). However, reason by itself will not be enough, in that as long as it operates apart from intuitive insight it will continue to fulfil its role of selecting means with regard to the maximisation of happiness in the phenomenal realm. Though we can achieve Schopenhauer’s practical aims to an extent through reason alone, the potential for success here is limited, and he states that even “the correct use of reason” is not “able to eliminate all the burdens and suffering of life and lead to bliss” (WWR1, 108). If, on the other hand, reason were acting in tandem with metaphysical insight, then the individual would realise that such a task of maximising happiness is an ultimately hopeless one, and their behaviour will instead arise from genuine virtue grounded in cognition that recognises the illusory nature of the principle of individuation.

The error of the Stoics ultimately lies in their overemphasis on the power of reason: Having noted the practical benefits that practical reason can bring

us, they attempt to extend the use of reason beyond its proper application. They wondered, Schopenhauer states,

whether reason, the great human prerogative, which appreciably though indirectly (through the planning of action and all that follows from this) lightens our lives and loads, might not also be capable of directly (i.e. using nothing but cognition) eliminating at once all the different kinds of suffering and sorrow that fill life—either completely, or at least for the most part. It was not considered fitting that a being endowed with the privilege of reason, who can use it to survey and take in an infinity of things and situations, should, in the present moment . . . nonetheless be exposed to the sort of intense anxiety and suffering that spring from the violent strain of desire and revulsion: it was thought that the proper application of reason must raise human beings above all this and be capable of making them invulnerable. (WWR1, 103–4)

The essence of Stoic thought, then, lies in a belief in the self-sufficiency of reason in lifting us above the tumult of the present moment, and even the world itself, to bring about happiness for the individual and the stilling of painful desires: “The Stoic insight was that privation and suffering do not follow immediately and necessarily from not-having, but rather from wanting-to-have and yet not having; consequently, this wanting-to-have is the necessary condition under which not-having becomes privation and gives rise to pain” (WWR1, 104).

We can thereby see a glimmer of truth in Stoicism (after all, it contains the very important truth that willing brings about suffering), but it will always be ultimately led astray through its prioritisation of reason, both theoretical and practically, at the expense of intuition.<sup>17</sup> As such, Schopenhauer’s approach to the Stoics is illustrative both of the importance of the use of reason for his philosophy (in that he recognises what the Stoics get right in regard to what reason can achieve for us), and its ultimate epistemological and practical impotence in comparison with genuine metaphysical insight through intuition.

As we have seen, Schopenhauer characterises the relationship between the philosophical writer and the reader as that of undertaking a journey together, progressively moving from the familiar world of the empirical consciousness through various ways of reflecting more deeply on the essence of life and the world. In this regard, both will need to rely upon their intuition to bring about genuine insights, less suffering, and a positive change in behaviour. This is not to say that reason does not have a role to play, though, in that practical reason is able to facilitate our philosophical development through bringing us to question and recognise the contingency of our life and existence in the world. The Stoics recognised this developmental role for reason to some extent, but failed to understand that happiness is ultimately unachievable in

the manner they envision. It is through this journey of development that we are able to thoroughly internalise the lessons of Schopenhauer's philosophy and potentially gain the salvation available to us through the negation or denial of the will. However, to this point, we have only considered the question of development on the individual level. In the following section, we will examine Schopenhauer's account of the possibility of philosophical development across generations.

## CROSS-GENERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As part of our examination of the developmental aspects of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, we can also note that his interest in the development of human beings is not just limited to the individual, in that he also seems to have an account of development on a familial and social level. Such a model of development on both a social level and across generations of a family is revealed in chapter 43 of *WWR2*, entitled 'Heritability of Traits.'

In this chapter, Schopenhauer puts forward a model of inheritance from parents to children, according to which one's intellect is inherited from one's mother, and one's will (including features salient to morality, such as our character) is inherited from one's father<sup>18</sup>: it is "at least probable that in procreation, the father, as the stronger sex and procreative principle, would provide the basis, the root element of the new life, which is to say the *will*, and the mother, as the inferior sex and merely receptive principle, would provide what is secondary, the *intellect*" (*WWR2*, 590). In this way, Schopenhauer takes from the assumed superiority of the male sex that a child receives the core or essence of their being from the father, with the secondary, less fundamental element, of the intellect inherited from the mother.

The individuality of a child derives from the unique interplay of their will and intellect (*WWR2*, 593).<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, Schopenhauer posits a particular character or disposition moving across generations, passed down through the male line: "there is a true identity of essence between father and son (this essence is the will), while between mother and son there is merely an identity of intellect . . . There can be the greatest moral opposition between mother and son, but only an intellectual opposition between father and son" (*WWR2*, 599). Though there will be some inevitable modifications due to the differences in intellect between fathers and sons, nevertheless we find the same character manifesting itself down the generations.

In line with this view, Schopenhauer praises the Stoic notion of the *logos spermatikos* (or 'seminal reason') as a metaphysical entity that ensures a certain amount of continuity across the generations of a particular species:

[by] means of [the *logos spermatikos*] we conceive that which asserts and preserves the identical form in successive individuals of a species by passing from one to the other, hence, as it were, the concept of the species embodied in the seed. Therefore, *logos spermatikos* is what is indestructible in the individual, what makes it one with the species, representing and preserving the latter. It is what prevents death, which destroys the individual, from attacking the species, by virtue of which the individual exists again and again, in defiance of death. (PP1, 56)

The kind of metaphysical principle Schopenhauer wishes to posit, following the Stoics, is one which not only explains how the form of the species is passed on across generations, but also considers the aspect of the individual which does survive death, while opposing theist accounts of personal immortality. While our mental life will not survive our bodily death, as supposed by theism, nevertheless an aspect of our individual existence will survive, namely, that part of us which makes us the kind of being we are. This kind of ‘species-essence,’ which all individuals of a given species partake in, ensures that while the individual is destroyed, the form of the species is not. Once we take the perspective of the species in this manner, we can come to see the sense in which the individual both dies and survives death, in a manner of speaking. Schopenhauer argues that though this account may not grant the kind of personal immortality assumed by theism, nevertheless there can be something consoling about this view due to its ‘beauty’ and ‘profundity’ (See *ibid.*).

Schopenhauer goes on to state that not only is character passed on through the generations, but we can also see character as *developing* across generations. He first signals this intergenerational developmental scheme when he suggests “the idea that a real and fundamental improvement of the human race may be possible, but not so much from without as from within, and thus not through teaching and education but through the generations” (WWR2, 602). The process of inheritance of both will and intellect could in fact lead the human race, as a whole, towards salvation, if the character that is passed on is improved from one generation to the next.

Discussing the development of will across generations, potentially arriving at the denial of the will in a particular individual down the generational line, Schopenhauer explicitly links this topic of the inheritance of the will and intellect to his overall developmental scheme: “the natural institution of the ever changing combination of a will and an intellect, which arises from the necessity of two sexes for procreation, becomes the basis for a way to salvation” (WWR2, 604). As the will is passed down through the male line, it is able to interact with differing intellects (from the female line), from one individual to the next. Each intellect brings with it different levels of cognizing,

and so, in each individual, “life presents itself in each of them from a different side and in another light; each individual gives the will a new fundamental view of life, teaches it a new lesson” (WWR2, 603). Each appearance of the will in each generation is, in a sense, a learning-session for itself about the nature of life in the phenomenal realm, with unique and varied instruction provided by the differing intellects with which it comes into contact.

The manner in which this instruction is taken forward is not altogether clear, in that while “the will cannot add directly to the insight gained over the course of a single life through the addition of those of others,” it can nevertheless undergo a potential development towards will-denial, insofar as “willing itself is given an entirely new direction; it experiences a modification, and most important, it must either affirm life anew or negate it” (ibid.). By occupying these differing orientations through a succession of individuals, the will is able to widen its perspective upon the world generally, and the kind of life lived within it. In response to this understanding, the will can either continue to will existence or can turn away from itself in horror, which is the developmental endpoint of Schopenhauer’s system, in which case “with death the whole phenomenon will cease for it” (ibid.). In this way, Schopenhauer clearly signals that the path to salvation, in which the will gains knowledge of the phenomenal realm, and hence its own nature or essence, is not taken by the individual alone; rather, it is a journey that crosses generations.

Schopenhauer’s quite remarkable discussion of inheritance from parents can go some way toward filling out the sense in which existence in the world as representation can be understood as a kind of original sin, where human individuals are tainted at a foundational level. According to the account we have just considered, our sin consists in the intergenerational will that we have inherited down the male line, one which has not yet denied itself, but has instead continued to will the painful, pointless existence that we lead. As such, the account presented here of guilt being passed on from one generation to the next clearly reflects the Christian doctrine of original sin, and Schopenhauer recognises such a connection. The act of copulation, through which the sex drive is allowed to fully manifest itself, is “the most decisive *affirmation of the will to life*” and “[with] that affirmation, which goes above and beyond the individual body to the production of a new one, suffering and death are affirmed again as well . . . and the possibility of redemption, which is brought about through the most perfect faculty of cognition, is declared fruitless for now” (WWR1, 387–88). The act of repudiating redemption in such a way, despite the painfulness of existence, gives rise to a deep sense of shame that, Schopenhauer claims, almost always accompanies copulation. The feeling of shame is what is “presented mythically in the dogma of the Christian doctrine that we are all part of Adam’s fall (which is obviously only



the satisfaction of sexual desire) and thereby guilty of suffering and death” (WWR1, 388).

We thus have an instance of the way in which religious doctrines can genuinely reflect deep metaphysical truths, albeit with the protective layer of allegory, and in this instance, the doctrine of original sin “transcends the consideration of things according to the principle of sufficient reason, and recognises the Idea of the human being” (ibid.). The doctrine of original sin reflects the deep recognition on the part of all human beings that there is something wrongful about existence, and thereby there is something undesirable in bringing about further existent beings through copulation, most viscerally revealed in the sense of shame that accompanies the physical act. We have an underlying sense of an inherently bad will being passed on from one generation to another, and yet we nevertheless do pass it on, negating the ways of redemption that are open to us and which could end the continued cycle of pain and suffering.

Further developing his focus on Christianity here, Schopenhauer also brings in questions of Christology as a counterpoint to the doctrine of original sin, reflecting the deep awareness of the possibility of redemption alongside the process of passing guilt from one generation to the next. While Adam is “the representative of the affirmation of life,” Christ is “the representative of the negation of the will to life” (ibid.), reflecting our deep understanding of the dual possibility open to human beings, that is, to negate or to affirm the will. The story of redemption through Christ’s self-sacrifice, delivering us “from the bonds of sin and death, i.e., the world” (ibid.) is the natural counterpoint to the doctrine of original sin. In this way, Christianity is able, through two of its most importance and distinctive doctrines, to give an allegorical expression to the cognizance of the guilt of continuing existence, both individually and across generations, in contrast to the possibility of redemption from suffering existence within the world as representation. Schopenhauer seemingly finds in these two doctrines a useful allegory that reveals deep ethical-metaphysical truths.

So, Schopenhauer offers an account of philosophical development that stretches not just over the life of the individual, but potentially across many generations. Though each individual has their own unique interplay of intellect and will, there is nevertheless a certain amount of continuity across generations that may result in an improvement in the general character of the species. Over different lifetimes, different manifestations of the intellect are able to garner a wider view of the nature of things, leading to an overall development in the direction of will-denial. Thus, Schopenhauer’s philosophy has an important role to play across generations to come, insofar as it can aid relevant reflection upon metaphysical issues and thereby shape the characters that are passed on from one generation to the next. However, those

who are born thoroughly enmeshed in the pain-filled world of representation do inherit a kind of original sin, insofar as this is a reflection of the failure of previous generations to engage sufficiently in will-denial.

So far in this chapter, we have focused on those who are potentially on the philosophical journey towards better consciousness or the denial of the will. However, what happens to those who are unsuccessful in this quest, or perhaps do not even try? Before this chapter concludes, we will briefly consider Schopenhauer's interesting account of the effects of living a suffering life on those who have reached old age, as an illuminating contrast to the possible salvific endpoint of the denial of the will.

## OLD AGE

Another important aspect of Schopenhauer's account of the development of the individual is to be found in his treatment of old age in *PP2*.<sup>20</sup> In the essay 'On the different stages of life',<sup>21</sup> Schopenhauer addresses the question of what happens to those individuals who do not achieve the negation of the will, and who instead get to old age having continued to affirm the will.<sup>22</sup> While we might expect to find Schopenhauer attributing an old age full of suffering to those who continue to affirm the will, his account is much more nuanced than that (perhaps reflecting his own experience of growing older, as we remember that *PP2* was published in 1851, when he was at the age of sixty-three): In fact, old age is made to seem rather more desirable than the experience of those in their early years. As an example, Schopenhauer (with more than a hint of autobiography) notes that, with regard to "excellent and talented individuals" who learn to "live alone, more or less, according to the degree of their merits," their experience through life will have this character:

During one's youth, one often has the feeling of being *abandoned* by the world; in later years, on the other hand, it is the feeling of having *escaped* from it. The former, an unpleasant one, rests on the lack of acquaintance with the world, the latter, a pleasant one, on being acquainted with it. —As a result, the second half of life contains, like the second half of a musical period, less striving, but more peace than the first. This depends on the fact that in our youth we believe that lots of happiness and pleasure can be found in the world and are just hard to come by, whereas in old age we know that there is nothing to be gained, and so are perfectly reassured, enjoy a tolerable present, and take delight even in little things. (*PP2*, 512–13)

It seems that, even if a given individual has not necessarily achieved the salvation of the negation of the will, they can nevertheless come to terms with

the suffering life they have led, to a certain extent. While we have not successfully denied the will, we have nevertheless learned that life as we know it can only be expected to be filled with pain and frustration, and we have modified our attitude towards it accordingly. Schopenhauer states that such an individual “[sees] the world differently from the youth” and has achieved “impartiality,” such that they “[see] things quite simply and [take] them for what they are” (PP2, 513).

As an interesting image to convey the difference between youth and old age he compares life to “a piece of embroidered material, of which we get to see the top side in the first half of our life and the reverse side in the second half; the latter is not beautiful, but more instructive, because it lets us see the connection of threads” (PP2, 514). In old age, we see the world (and the kind of life we lead in it) for what it is: we have seen that all our desires come to naught, that the world is full of pain and suffering, and we are powerless to change it in a substantive way. While the youth may be tricked in thinking that the world is beautiful, the old person is under no such illusion, probably leaving them with a misanthropic, serious character (see PP2, 514–15).

Given the new ‘impartiality’ towards the world, following from the accumulation of experience by the old person, their attitude towards life will undergo a kind of deadening, in which they are no longer rocked by the tumult of everyday life:

The older we become, the less consciously we live. Things rush by without leaving an impression, just as the work of art that we have seen a thousand times makes none. We do what we have to do, and afterwards do not know whether we have done it. The more unconscious life becomes, the more it rushes towards the complete cessation of consciousness, the faster becomes its course . . . [Gradually], through the long habit of perceiving the same things, the intellect is ground down so far that more and more everything passes over it without effect, so that the days becomes more and more insignificant and thus shorter. (PP2, 519)

Due to the chastening experience of life, in which the will has been continuously affirmed, the intellect begins to dull, and the individual pays less attention to life, perhaps along the lines of a psychological defence mechanism, in which painful thoughts are repressed in order to save the ego from anxiety.

Such a process can become so all-encompassing that the individual becomes stuck in routines as an effect of a deadened attitude towards the world around them:

Most people, who were always dull, turn more and more into automata the older they grow; they think, say, and do always the same, and no external impression is able to change this any longer or elicit something new from them. Speaking

to such old people is like writing in sand; the impression is wiped out almost immediately. So an old age of this sort is, of course, merely the dead residue of life. (PP2, 527)

Thus, for those who have continued to affirm the will, the life they have led has scarred them to such an extent that they have ceased to engage with the world in any substantive, novel way. Stuck in their everyday routines and situations, they go through life automatically, with little sign of new desires and projects having an impact upon their behaviour.

While the old person has achieved a type of ‘peace’ and ‘impartiality’ towards the world, this is not the peace of those who have attained the negation of the will. They are still very much stuck in the illusion of the world as representation, believing that there is no way of escape other than to try cultivating a new attitude towards life, a project carried out in the spirit of an egoistic defence mechanism. There is certainly no escape or salvation here; rather, a sad ending to a life filled with pain and suffering, with an acceptance that there is nothing more to life than the tragedy of the cycle of willing. Neither is there freedom here, such as can be attained by the individual who has denied the will, in that this person is still under the authority of the will, and has constrained themselves to such an extent that to the outside world, they may appear as akin to an automaton. The old person sees the world “as a rapid flight of ephemeral appearances . . . [such that] the worthlessness of the whole emerges” (PP2, 528), and understands that “there is little behind most desired things and longed-for pleasures . . . and hence have gradually gained insight into the great poverty and vacuity of our entire existence” (PP2, 527), but they are not able to see beyond that illusory chain of dreadful events, and cannot conceive that there may be a potential escape from them. There is a kind of liberation that one achieves through the denial of the will that is not present here, either, and the individual character remains intact. Due to this, we can see that Schopenhauer’s understanding of the denial of the will (to which metaphysical reflection can aid us) is not as a simple change in attitude towards the world in which we live; the change in constitution of consciousness that he wishes to point towards is more fundamental than that, even though there may be some similarities in behaviour between those who have denied the will and those who have been scarred by their experiences through life (such as, for example, a tendency towards solitude).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have been considering the developmental aspects of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, with a view to discerning how his hopes for philosophy in having an

impact upon the individual play out in his metaphilosophy. The importance of the notion of forms of consciousness, linked to his idealist commitment to the subject-object correlativity thesis, has been examined, and we have seen that from his very earliest philosophical reflections, Schopenhauer sought to formulate a philosophy that explores higher forms of consciousness that are available to us. Such forms of consciousness meet the need for metaphysics by not only revealing something of the essence of the world, but also bringing practical benefits related to the tranquilizing of the will. Our considerations concerning the development of individuals, and their potential response to the metaphysics of will, has also led us to consider the fate who those who reach old age without realising the kind of soteriological goals that Schopenhauer attempts to describe, as well as the potential moral development of humankind as a whole across generations.

In the following chapter, we will complete our examination of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy by considering different conceptions of this aspect of his work, with a focus on his use of metaphor and speculation. I argue that Schopenhauer can be fruitfully read as taking a metaphilosophical approach that seeks to find a balance between an immanent and more speculative philosophical method. In addition, while other scholars have noted the artistic and metaphorical aspects of Schopenhauer's work, I argue that these should not be overstated, and that we should read his texts with a keen understanding of the variety of rhetorical devices that are used in his attempt to communicate intuitively-gained truths at a conceptual level.

## NOTES

1. My use of the notion of 'better consciousness' here as setting a general theme for Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy throughout his works would perhaps be challenged by Kossler, who states, "[some] scholars speak of 'a theory' of better consciousness; however, this is overstated since the concept of better consciousness changed with the years" (2012, 475 n.5). However, my claim that Schopenhauer's 'better consciousness,' as found in the notes, reveals the general tenor of his thought throughout his philosophy is not committed to there being a fully-worked out 'theory of better consciousness,' which we can retrieve and substantively reconstruct, and neither does it commit me to the view that there is no evolution in Schopenhauer's thought in this matter. My interpretation is supported by Janaway, who writes that, though Schopenhauer "abandoned the term 'better consciousness' in his published works, the core of this vision remained with him throughout" (2009, 2). Such a view is echoed by Cross, who writes, of the better consciousness, that "the idea it represents (though not the expression) remained present in [Schopenhauer's] thought throughout the remainder of his life" (2014, 196). As I wish to argue here, Jordan (2009, 212 n. 230) also suggests that Schopenhauer's conception of the better consciousness later develops

into the notion of the form of consciousness achieved by those who deny the will, and as such, the discussions of better consciousness in the early notebooks marks his continuing search for a salvific endpoint for his philosophy.

2. It is also worth noting the ongoing Platonic influence upon Schopenhauer's early notion of 'better consciousness' too, following Vandenabeele, who remarks that in this period of the notebooks, we find "Schopenhauer's Platonic aspirations and his obsessions with the 'better consciousness,' which has much in common with Plato's account of the pure timeless knowledge of the soul" (2009, 45). Though there is clearly Platonic influence here, I will largely focus upon the potential influence of Indian thought during this period, as I believe that this is more revealing with regard to Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy.

3. The fact that the notion of the 'better consciousness' appears so early in the notes leads Cross to posit that it could not have been initially inspired by Schopenhauer's reading of the *Upanishads* and other texts of Indian philosophy (see 2013, 205). It is thus likely that Schopenhauer's initial reflections upon better consciousness derive from his knowledge of the mystical tradition of Christianity, as well as the potential attainment of higher cognition in the Platonic system.

4. Mannion discusses Schopenhauer's use of a method similar to that of the *via negativa* of apophatic theology at some length, characterising the metaphilosophical approach of the metaphysics of will as the 'humble path' to knowledge: "[Schopenhauer's] philosophical humility, that humble path, takes him through the descriptive analysis of the awful misery of existence but nonetheless identifies where such misery is transcended . . . Schopenhauer does not, then, attempt to describe that state in positive terms, he remains humble in adopting the method of apophatic theology, the *via negativa*" (2003, 288). Mannion argues that Schopenhauer follows the general theological method of avoiding the tendency towards epistemic hubris with regard to the in-itself, and the *via negativa* is potentially a good way of ensuring this. This is not to say, though, that I follow Mannion in seeing the potential use of the *via negativa* within the context of Schopenhauer's system as leading to the view that there is space for a kind of mystical theism within the metaphysics of will, with such a philosophical tool showing that Schopenhauer "interprets and legitimates theological enquiry" (2003, 50). As Ryan states, Mannion rightly points out "the many and undoubted parallels between Christian and Schopenhauerian ethics, but seems to [erroneously] presuppose that such parallels either do or ought to reflect metaphysical and even theological parallels between the two systems" (2010, 95). Though Christian ethics does have some value for Schopenhauer, insofar as it may promote practices that reflect a pessimistic approach to the world, Christian dogma, and indeed the dogma of any theistic system (apart from the sense in which it reflects the wrongness of the world), is to be rejected without hesitation: "Schopenhauer's critique of theism was not mounted for the purpose of establishing naturalism, secularism or humanism, but for the religious end of preserving the [moral] 'essence' of Christianity by purging it of what he regarded as its false, harmful and supernatural elements" (Ryan 2010, 96–97). Further, as Peters (2014, 184–85) points out, Mannion's attempt to create a space for theism within the metaphysics of will makes Schopenhauer's philosophy

even more speculative than it might be already, thus going against his repeated claims to not be engaging in idle speculation.

5. Schopenhauer connects aesthetic experience with a higher state of consciousness as early as 1813, when he speaks of poetry “directly or indirectly [presenting] us with that better consciousness in its many different effects,” and of paintings expressing “the eternal and . . . the better consciousness” (MR1, 49).

6. As a precursor to Schopenhauer’s view of metaphysics as involving the intertwining of both theoretical and practical concerns, he writes that the better consciousness “is neither practical nor theoretical, for these are merely divisions of reason” (MR1, 24).

7. In a later note, Schopenhauer goes on to speak of reason as “a faculty that is far inferior to the loftiest better consciousness” (MR1, 53). Elsewhere, the conflict instigated by the better consciousness becomes one with temporal consciousness, which is described as the “negation of the better consciousness” (MR1, 50). Schopenhauer states that as long as we remain under the power of the ‘temporal consciousness,’ “we are in this way abandoned to desires and thus gravitate towards vice . . . our entire nature is *subjective*, that is to say we see in things nothing but their relation to our individuality and its needs” (ibid.). Thus here, we begin to see the notion of the power of willing over our consciousness coming to the fore, shaping our consciousness such that it views things only in an interested, potentially falsifying manner. Following the adoption of the better consciousness, Schopenhauer writes that we thereby “*objectively consider, i.e., contemplate* the things of the world, [and as a result] for the moment *subjectivity* and thus the source of all misery has vanished,” and so, “the material world of the senses stands before us as something strange and foreign which no longer wears us down” (ibid.). So, the better consciousness is equated early on with the notion of seeing the world anew in an objective manner, which brings along certain practical benefits such as the loss of the misery that characterises our current existence.

8. App (2014, 193) makes the important point that this is sometimes mistakenly thought to be the earliest mention of Maya in Schopenhauer’s notes, but the phrase ‘Maya of the Indians’ was a later addition to the original note in the margin. However, it is likely that this addition was made soon after the writing of the original note.

9. Cross (2014, 78–89) explores fundamental features of Advaita Vedanta in relation to Schopenhauer’s philosophy in greater detail than offered here.

10. Cross notes that the distinction between the empirical and better consciousness here mirrors some traditional Indian thought regarding the adoption of two different standpoints towards the world, with the “relative truth of the everyday world . . . [corresponding] to empirical consciousness, and the ultimate or absolute truth in which the world is sublated . . . to the better consciousness (or denial of the will)” (2014, 205).

11. Janaway argues that the subject-object correlativity thesis is part of Schopenhauer’s positive attack on materialism, which would state that “everything that exists is a modification of matter, [and] would exist as such in the absence of any subjects of experience” (1989, 175). We could in this manner construe Schopenhauer’s argument as a kind of Berkeley-state ‘master argument,’ in which

we argue that the very notion of a material object existing unperceived is incoherent, due to our realization of the necessary correlativity between object and subject (see Berkeley 1871, 167).

12. Zöller argues against the interpretation of the subject-object correlativity thesis as being “more than a generic relation of mutual existential dependence . . . [involving] specific sets of forms that are responsible for specific features of objects” (1995, 6). He states that, while it is easy to identify the “epistemic conditions for objects of empirical consciousness and self-consciousness (space, time and causality), one is hard pressed to identify relevant subjective conditions for aesthetic and ethical objectivity” (ibid.). However, it is worth pointing out, in relation to our preceding discussion regarding the limits of language, that it would be (of necessity) difficult to express the subjective conditions for aesthetic experience, as well as the kind of experience that pierces through the principle of individuation, which results in genuinely compassionate actions. It seems clear, from his discussion regarding the interested nature of empirical consciousness, that Schopenhauer believes there to be a deep correlation between subject and object, beyond the general idealist claim of the existential dependence of the object on the subject, such that the nature of the subject has an impact upon the nature of the object as it appears to the subject, down to the very fundamental form of consciousness. Further, I would argue that Schopenhauer’s reiteration of this point, and the prominent place he gives to the thesis at the start of *WWR1*, suggests that he believes this thesis to be an important part of his philosophy that marks a significant development in the idealist tradition.

13. It is here that we may find another aspect of the influence of Kant, who, in his *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*, argues that a process of moral development in the phenomenal realm is conceptually preceded by a fundamental change in disposition (see 6: 47–48). Though Schopenhauer never directly references *Religion* in his works, it is difficult to believe that he was not at least aware of the general details of Kant’s claims regarding a potential revolution in disposition, particularly as he references the related notion of ‘radical evil’ at one point (PP2, 229).

14. Schopenhauer’s view of the nature of the potential antagonism between the will and cognition leads him to the view that the virtue of an individual is not contingent upon the strength of will in the individual alone, stating that genuine ‘loving kindness’ “can happen regardless of how strong and energetic the will appearing in such an individual might be in itself. Cognition can always act as a counter-balance, teaching him to resist wrong and giving rise to every degree of goodness” (*WWR1*, 439). Therefore, what makes a person virtuous or evil is not the strength of their will per se; rather, it rests upon the relative strength of their cognition and will.

15. I am very grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this point.

16. Schopenhauer’s treatment of the Stoics is examined in more detail elsewhere (Head 2016a), and I will not repeat that discussion here. I argue there that Schopenhauer has a more positive valuation of Stoicism than is often recognised, to the extent that he is willing to defend what he takes to be the essence of Stoic thought against its apparent mistreatment at the hands of some Stoic thinkers. Further, Schopenhauer sees in Stoicism an attempt at a soteriology that, though in some respects misguided, has nevertheless some worthwhile aspects that are not far



removed from Schopenhauer's own theory of salvation. Young (1987, 17–18) also notes the positive account offered by Schopenhauer of the idealised 'Stoic sage,' and Janaway states that "Schopenhauer recognizes Stoicism as a valuable contribution to ethics, but more for its aim than for its results" (2014, 49).

17. Schopenhauer argues that the limitations and fundamental errors of Stoicism are reflected in the figure of the idealised Stoic sage, in that "the Stoics were never able to present their ideal . . . as a living being with inner poetic truth; he remains stiff and wooden, a mannequin that no one can engage with and who does not himself know what to do with his own wisdom" (WWR1, 108–9). Unlike other possible moral examples, such as the sages of India and the Christian saviour in the form of Christ (see WWR1, 109), we are "unable to form any intuitive representation" of the Stoic sage, and thus it is not able to have the kind of motivational force available to other kinds of moral examples, particularly those that exemplify systems of thought that are grounded in genuine intuitive insight. Due to the essence of Stoic thought not having such a foundation, its idealised figure will always have an air of falsity about it.

18. As Jordan rightly notes, Schopenhauer gives very little evidence for his views regarding the different inheritance we receive from our mother and father: "Beyond these broad and somewhat speculative generalisations . . . Schopenhauer provides no reason for believing that each parent contributes only one of these two facets of an individual's make-up. As such, while both character and intellect might be identified as the results of heredity, there is little to recommend Schopenhauer's distinction between these two aspects of one's constitution in terms of gender" (2009, 63). There does indeed seem little reason for Schopenhauer to be quite as detailed as he is with regard to the aspects of our constitution which we receive exclusively from our mother and father, though this of course does not challenge his overall views regarding inheritance and development across the generations.

19. Such interplay, as Schopenhauer argues, is for most people a burden, as it often leads to an inner disharmony that is particularly pronounced in individuals whose parents were more mismatched in their respective natures (WWR2, 601).

20. An examination of Schopenhauer's account of life for those who have got to old age, while continuing to affirm the will, is offered by Lütkehouse (1985), though this is a very concise comparative piece with other philosophers on the topic of old age.

21. I offer a detailed methodological defence of the use of the section 'On the Different Periods of Life,' part of 'Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life,' as a platform for understanding the rest of Schopenhauer's philosophy, in some detail elsewhere (see 2016b, 435–38), and so I will not repeat that discussion here.

22. Section 2 of my paper 'Schopenhauer on the Development of the Individual' (2016b) gives a more extensive treatment of Schopenhauer's account of individual development throughout the different stages of life, tying together his reflections on childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age.

## Philosophy, Metaphor and Speculation

In the previous chapters, we considered various aspects of Schopenhauer's account of the nature of philosophy, the manner in which it shapes his philosophy, and the impact it has upon the way in which he presents his theories.<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer claims that philosophy is grounded in an intuitive sense of the wrongness of the world and intimations of its essence that can be found both in introspective reflection and considerations upon general features of the world of our experience. Through active readership and contemplation upon Schopenhauer's carefully-constructed works, we are ideally encouraged to reflect upon our own experience, with a view to accessing higher forms of consciousness that can offer a way out of our suffering-filled lives.

In this final chapter, we will focus on competing conceptions of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, with a particular emphasis on his use of metaphor and speculation. I argue Schopenhauer can be read as taking a stylistic approach that uses metaphor and imagery to inspire reflections that take place on the border between what he calls 'rationalism' and 'illumination.' It is in this way that he seeks to find a balance between a purely immanent approach that does not go beyond experience and a speculative path that seeks signs of the transcendent. As a result, I argue that Schopenhauer allows for a speculative element to his system that forms a harmonious part of his overall metaphilosophical approach.

We will also consider in more detail some other metaphilosophical readings that have been offered of Schopenhauer's work, not only with regard to the extent to which he engages in metaphorical and speculative approaches, but also on the artistic aspect of his writing. I argue that though there is undeniably an artistic or poetic aspect to Schopenhauer's work, this feature of his writing can easily be overstated. I also consider the use of metaphor in Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy and argue that it reflects his philosophy of communication, as discussed in a previous chapter, insofar as it is for him an

important tool for philosophical inspiration, even though it does not extend metaphysical insight itself.

## CONCEPTIONS OF SCHOPENHAUER'S METAPHYSICS

Throughout this work, I have presented a conception of Schopenhauer's work that is at odds with some other metaphilosophical readings that have been proposed. In this section, I consider certain competing metaphilosophical interpretations of Schopenhauer and offer some objections to their approach, before I focus on specifically aesthetic readings of Schopenhauer's philosophy in the following section.

One particularly notable conception of Schopenhauer's metaphysics that we have already considered in passing is that offered by Julian Young, who marks something of a contrast from the interpretation offered here. Young's interpretation is motivated by his puzzlement at Schopenhauer's apparent claims regarding the possibility of a specific kind of intuition through which we can garner genuine metaphysical insight. Although admitting that Schopenhauer "gives, sometimes severe, provocation" (1987, 28) to such interpretations, he questions, "how *could* a man who takes such relish in lampooning the idea of 'rational intuition,' of little 'windows' through which Hegelians peer at the Absolute . . . entertain seriously, even for a moment, the idea of 'subterranean passages' to the noumenal?" (1987, 29).

Such puzzlement is entirely understandable, in that it often seems as if Schopenhauer is allowing himself to indulge in the kind of metaphysical speculation which he so thoroughly castigates the Absolute idealists, and others, for undertaking. Young's proposed palliative for our interpretive puzzlement is essentially to hold that, for Schopenhauer, metaphysical knowledge is not in fact knowledge of that which underlies all things, what we might think of as 'ultimate reality.' Young argues that Schopenhauer never intends to claim that we can learn anything of the thing in itself, stating that he merely "flirts with, rather than embraces, the idea of experiential encounters with the noumenal" (1987, 30), and that underlying his metaphysics is a rejection of "the simple Kantian dichotomy between appearance and ultimate, noumenal reality," replaced with a "trichotomy, interposing between noumenal reality on the one hand and the ordinary world . . . on the other, a third world distinct from either" (1987, 31).

It is this third world that is actually the object of Schopenhauer's metaphysical investigations. As Young argues, it is,

Non-noumenal and hence situated within the Kantian boundaries, yet esoteric and so distinct from the ordinary world, [that it] could then constitute the topic

of metaphysical investigation. And such an investigation could satisfy the constraints of concept-empiricism yet, at the same time, provide a genuine extraordinary, exotic, world-description worthy of the adjective 'metaphysics', were it the case that in constructing its world-description it made use of some aspect of experience neglected by our ordinary world-view . . . or, at least, extend the concept of the object of such experience radically beyond its usual sphere of application. (1987, 32)

On this interpretation, Schopenhauer believes that he has gained some metaphysical insight by offering a novel description of reality within Kantian epistemic limits. Schopenhauer does not make any claims regarding 'ultimate reality' itself; rather, he is offering an extension of what we can understand through experience. We are thereby able to grasp what is presented in our experience in a deeper sense than through ordinary reflection, which we can think of as grasping a third intermediate realm that falls short of noumenal reality. This reading is thus an attempt to keep Schopenhauer's philosophy within the bounds of experience as set by Kant in the Critical philosophy, while offering a sense in which his philosophy makes claims that go beyond our everyday experience.

Though I will offer my own points against Young's trichotomy interpretation, it is worth considering Janaway's critique, which notes that there is very little textual evidence in favour of it. Janaway states that, "there is little evidence of [Schopenhauer] thinking in terms of such a trichotomy," as well as reminding us of the fact that, "Schopenhauer says over and over again that the thing in itself is will . . . [and if] this was not what [he] really wanted to say, he had ample opportunity to expunge [passages which state otherwise] from the later editions of the work, in which he made many other changes" (1999, 163). Schopenhauer seems to straightforwardly claim that the thing in itself is will, which must be an insuperable difficulty for any metaphysical reading that denies that he was trying to cognise something of ultimate reality. After all, the very title of Schopenhauer's masterwork (*The World as Will and Representation*) and many passages, such as when he states that, "if we think clearly and carefully, we will not find anything except representation and thing in itself" (WWR1, 526), clearly divide reality into two: the world as will and the world as representation. Indeed, Schopenhauer criticizes Kant for adding a third element to the distinction between thing in itself and representation: "Kant actually makes a three-way distinction: (1) representation; (2) the object of representation; (3) the thing in itself . . . But there are no grounds for distinguishing between representation and the object of representation" (ibid.). Janaway argues that, if Schopenhauer wished to remain within Kantian epistemic limits, he would have almost certainly tempered his claims explicitly: "he is more likely to say that will is the aspect of the phenomenal

world closest to the absolute thing in itself, or that it is the aspect of the thing in itself closest to knowability. He is very unlikely to say that will at the level of metaphysical investigation is neither thing in itself nor representation" (1999, 163). So, Janaway is clear that the textual evidence points firmly against Young's trichotomy interpretation of the nature of metaphysical investigation. With this in mind, we can now turn to our objections to Young, given our metaphilosophical reflections to this point.

The first point we can make is in response to Young's claim that Schopenhauer merely 'flirts' with, rather than 'embraces,' the idea of our experience touching upon that which is beyond it. Schopenhauer explores the notion of our experience granting some sense of that which is beyond the phenomenal realm repeatedly, in several texts from both early and later stages of his philosophical career. We can discern Schopenhauer continually working to refine what he precisely wants to claim regarding the potential expansion of our cognition beyond experience. Such "tortuous tergiversations" (1987, 30), as Young calls them, such as claiming that the will presents itself in our experience as 'veiled' in the form of time, are not a reflection of his unhappiness with the idea of metaphysical insight through experience per se; rather, they are reflections of Schopenhauer struggling to precisely delineate his position in presenting that which is difficult to convey in as successful a manner as possible. Thus, I argue that Schopenhauer remains committed to this apparently speculative element of his system, as he believes that his careful, nuanced position (which I will lay out in more detail later on in this chapter) can allow him genuine metaphysical insight in his philosophy, while observing Kantian epistemic limits.

In addition to offering the claim in support of his position that Schopenhauer only 'flirts' with the notion of experience offering insight into that which lies beyond it, Young also argues that his "detailed discussion of the nature of philosophy suggest that its interest is in a *natural* rather than supernatural domain," in that science ultimately cannot provide "a comprehensive explanation of nature and [thus] must turn to philosophy for the completion of that task" (1987, 32). Thus, the metaphysics of will, as established primarily in Book 2 of *WWR*, is to be understood as "an account of the natural, not of a transcendental world" (*ibid.*).

As we have already seen, Young is quite right in arguing that philosophy is required to 'step in' at the point where natural science meets the inexplicable, as part of the human quest to attain a complete explanation of the world. However, given the point where the regress of explanation stops, with the laws of nature, it seems that our continuing search for an explanation must attempt to look beyond the phenomenal realm. Schopenhauer's point, with regard to the limits of natural science, is that an explanation of the laws of nature cannot be a natural one, and thus we must look to metaphysics for

some sort of insight into why the laws of nature are the way they are. Thus, in contrast to Young, I argue that the metaphysics of will must be intended as at least touching upon the essence of the natural world.

Further to this, Young refers to Schopenhauer's stated adherence to Kantian epistemic limits, as well as his general caution regarding the intuitive insights that are available to us, for example, that the metaphysics of will gives an account of the world "within certain limits that are inseparable from our finite nature" (WWR1, 507). However, I argue that my interpretation proposes a reading of Schopenhauer which shows how he intended to stay within Kantian epistemic limits, and remain epistemically humble with regard to metaphysical insight, while being able to touch upon the essence of the world in some way. We can note that, following the previous quotation, Schopenhauer writes that despite our epistemic limits we are still able to "obtain a proper understanding of the world, but without achieving a complete and self-sufficient explanation of its existence" (*ibid.*), which accords with the interpretation offered here. An epistemic middle-ground does not necessarily entail that his metaphysical investigations are of an ontological middle-ground too.

We can also consider an interpretation of Schopenhauer's claims to metaphysical cognizance proposed by Atwell, which has similarities to Young's trichotomy interpretation insofar as it attempts to interpret Schopenhauer as remaining within Kantian epistemic limits by limiting his metaphysical ambitions. Atwell's interpretation here revolves around the claim that "Schopenhauer has two different conceptions of the thing in itself" (1995, 126), one which is 'philosophical,' the other 'mystical.' The 'philosophical' conception of the thing in itself should be taken as the thing in itself in relation to appearance, in other words, the manner in which the thing in itself makes its appearance in the phenomenal realm, and it is this conception which is in play when Schopenhauer claims the identification of the thing in itself with will. At other times, Schopenhauer refers to the 'mystical conception' of the thing in itself, which in this instance,

signifies ultimate reality, the noumenon (if one thinks of Kant), or, to say it best, unconditioned being . . . that which is, by definition, not conditioned by any mode of knowledge or thought . . . It is therefore wholly ineffable, completely 'beyond' the reaches of knowledge, thought, and conceptualization; as such it is wholly 'beyond' the domain of philosophy. On this conception, one can 'speak of' the thing in itself only in a negative fashion. (Atwell 1995, 126–27)

By distinguishing between the thing in itself in two senses in Schopenhauer's work, we can interpret his methodology as respecting Kantian epistemic limits in this manner: Whenever he makes positive claims about the thing in

itself, such as when he states that the thing in itself is will, he is only referring to the manner in which it appears in the phenomenal realm. On other occasions, he may be referring to the thing in itself in a mystical sense that does not commit him to any sort of positive characterisation of it that would go beyond Kantian epistemic limits.

In order to expand upon this distinction between the two senses of ‘thing in itself,’ Atwell refers to worries surrounding the doctrine of the denial or negation of the will, where it might seem strange to suppose that the will, as thing in itself, could possibly abolish itself. He argues that interpreting Schopenhauer as holding two conceptions of ‘thing in itself’ can help us overcome this interpretive difficulty, which particularly comes to the fore in this passage:

what then is that will which displays itself in the world and as the world, absolutely finally in itself? i.e., what is it quite apart from the fact that it displays itself as *will*, or *makes its appearance* in any way at all, i.e., *is cognized* in any way at all? . . . [The] possibility of this question shows that the thing in itself, of which we are most immediately cognizant in the will, may have, entirely beyond any possible phenomenon, determinations, properties, manners of existence that are for us absolutely incognizable and incomprehensible, and that remain precisely as the essence of the thing in itself when . . . the latter has freely nullified itself as will, therefore stepped out of the phenomenon entirely and, for our cognizance . . . passed into empty nothingness. If will were the thing in itself simply and absolutely, then this nothing would also be something *absolute*, instead of turning out for us precisely there as expressly *relative*. (WWR2, 221–22)

In this passage, we seemingly come into contradiction unless we construe Schopenhauer as having two conceptions of ‘thing in itself,’ one tied to how the thing in itself appears in the phenomenal realm, and the other tied to a bare notion of ultimate reality apart from the world of appearance. If the will is referring to the ultimate reality, and an individual negates the will, then there can be nothing (in an absolute sense) if an individual negates the will. Schopenhauer indeed seems to imply that if the will were thing in itself in Atwell’s ‘mystical’ sense, then the ‘nothingness’ attained by the individual who has negated the will would be absolute, rather than relative. Therefore, we should maybe read this passage as revealing Schopenhauer using the term ‘thing in itself’ in a different sense, connected to the thing in itself as it appears (in the guise of will), rather than in the more straightforward sense as standing for ultimate reality, such that the individual who negates the will is only left with a ‘relative nothingness.’

Thus, Atwell argues that this passage reveals Schopenhauer’s distinction between two senses of the thing-in-itself: “it makes philosophical sense to speak of the thing in itself only in relation to appearance, but that beyond

philosophy, hence with mysticism, the thing in itself wholly apart from appearance must be acknowledged—even though nothing can be said about it, at least ‘positively,’ for to do so would amount to transcendent metaphysics” (1995, 125). It appears that we must take Schopenhauer’s key claim that ‘the thing in itself is will’ as holding only for the aspect of the thing in itself which appears in the phenomenal realm, and as not applying to the thing in itself as ‘ultimate reality.’ We are thereby able to exculpate Schopenhauer from the charge of contradiction regarding his claim that ultimate reality could potentially negate itself.

In response to this interpretation, it must be said that Atwell’s interpretation has greater support in the text than Young’s ‘trichotomy’ interpretation, though we are missing a clear statement from Schopenhauer in favour of construing ‘thing in itself’ in two different senses, as Atwell himself admits: “Schopenhauer does not explicitly say that he has two very different conceptions of the thing in itself, though, I submit, his late letters, late publications, and even a few passages in the first edition of *The World as Will and Representation* make the distinction fairly clear” (1995, 127). Schopenhauer does show a desire to be cautious about what he claims regarding the thing in itself, and construing the claims that he does make about the thing in itself as applying to the term in Atwell’s ‘philosophical sense’ does give a plausible way for the metaphysics of will to remain immanent to our experience, respecting Kantian epistemic limits, and not indulging in unacceptable speculation. Due to the textual and philosophical support for Atwell’s interpretation, then, I argue that we can by-and-large accept it (as at least going along the right lines). However, I would resist the notion that philosophy is strictly limited to the thing in itself in the ‘philosophical sense’ identified by Atwell, in that, I suggest, philosophical cognition can at least touch upon, or point towards, the thing-in-itself in Atwell’s ‘mystical sense.’ As we shall see, Schopenhauer believes that philosophy can involve a form of mysticism that grants some limited cognition of the nature of ultimate reality.

## PHILOSOPHY AND THE ARTISTIC METHOD

In addition to the conceptions of Schopenhauer’s metaphilosophy offered by Atwell and Young, which both in different ways attempt to deflate his metaphysical claims to some extent, we can also consider recent aestheticist readings of his work. Such interpretations are in part inspired by Schopenhauer’s use of imagery to communicate his philosophical system. Schopenhauer often uses imagery to point towards philosophical insights, and is not afraid to indulge in rhetorical flourishes, particularly concerning the undesirable form of existence within the world as representation and the endless (non-literal)



repetition of time: as an example, he states that we can aid our grasp of the fundamentally unchanging nature of human history by thinking “of the alternation of birth and death [as] infinitely fast vibrations” (WWR2, 548), which is how the course of human history would appear to “an incomparably longer living eye, which grasps the human race in its whole duration in a single glance” (WWR2, 551). To such a being, “the steady change of birth and death would look like a constant vibration,” and thus, if we can use such imagery to cognize such a standpoint, some philosophical insight may be garnered: “rather, just as our eye sees the rapidly turning spark as a steady circle, the rapidly vibrating spring as a permanent triangle, the vibrating cord as a spindle, so this eye would see the species as what is and remains, and death and birth as vibrations” (ibid.). Such imagery is found throughout Schopenhauer’s texts and adds immensely to its impact in aiding us to grasp difficult truths.

Indeed, as Snow emphasises, Schopenhauer’s philosophical writing style is remarkably idiosyncratic, to the extent that it is rather difficult to characterise in relation to other philosophical texts:

Whatever it is, *The World as Will and Representation* is not a dialogue, a hymn, a *Vorselung*, a sermon, and so on. Schopenhauer’s writing could never be characterised as aphoristic; but neither is his major work a commonplace book. And although Schopenhauer professes that he draws his philosophical inspiration from Plato and Kant, his writing is clearly not imitative of theirs. He did not write dialogues, nor critiques, nor prolegomena, nor a *Grundlegung*. The oddity of his work is all the more conspicuous if we compare it to the philosophical/literary forms adopted by Schopenhauer’s contemporaries and immediate predecessors . . . Schopenhauer’s presentation of his philosophy is stylistically unique. (1993, 405)

The use of such an idiosyncratic style in Schopenhauer’s works have brought some scholars to consider the extent to which he consciously uses artistic methods in the presentation of his philosophy. We will begin by examining a recent aestheticist interpretation of Schopenhauer offered by Sophia Vasalou.

As we saw earlier, Schopenhauer believes that the transition from intuition to conceptualisation or rationalisation is an undesirable, but necessary, one in philosophical communication. If we want to communicate our philosophical insights to others, we must undertake such a process even though much will be lost along the way, to the extent that the reader must retrieve the insights themselves from their own experience, without being able to garner them from the text directly. However, Vasalou (2013) has suggested a radically different understanding of the movement from intuition to rationalisation in the context of Schopenhauer’s system: indeed, under her account, it is a transition that is to be celebrated, not bemoaned.

In order to explicate Vasalou's approach, we can focus on her comments surrounding the recognition of all things having the same essence, namely, will: she argues that such an insight "was not a matter of crafting arguments or proofs, or offering rational demonstrations" (2013, 17), for the limits of explanation, as set down by the principle of sufficient reason, will not extend that far. So, how should we characterise what has happened? Vasalou states that we should see the insight as,

a movement upward . . . deriving its impetus and starting point from something very close to home, and to immediate experience. The task of philosophy was to effect an epistemic transformation so that something known existentially or experientially—by what Schopenhauer called knowledge of perception or feeling—was 'raised' to an articulate and communicable form—what Schopenhauer called knowledge of reason. (ibid.)

Such a view of the transition from intuition to rationalisation in Schopenhauer's philosophy is grounded in a very complex and nuanced discussion in Vasalou's work, and I could not hope to do it full justice here. However, in general terms, we can make two main points against Vasalou's interpretation of the 'movement' of Schopenhauer's philosophy.

The first is that Vasalou's account seems to be in tension with Schopenhauer's commitment to concept-empiricism and the process of abstraction that plays an important role in the rationalisation and communicability of philosophical insights. Once we bear this process in mind, it is difficult to see how we can construe the transition from intuition to rationalisation in the context of Schopenhauer's system as involving metaphysics being 'raised' to a higher status. The way in which much is 'lost in translation' in the conceptualisation process is something that is unfortunate for philosophy, and makes the philosopher's role much more difficult, and thus does not seem to play the positive role in Schopenhauer's understanding of the exposition of his system that Vasalou attributes to it.

Further to this, we can focus on Vasalou's approach to the Platonic Ideas as a background to her interpretation of the intuition-reason transition. Vasalou argues that the 'upwards' movement that Schopenhauer undertakes, in order to reach the higher 'knowledge of reason,' involves an outward movement that involves cognition of the Ideas. In this manner, she proposes an aestheticist reading of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, which argues, generally speaking, that Schopenhauer's philosophical method should be read within the framework of his aesthetics, such that his philosophical texts can be understood as a sort of artwork. If his works are read in such a manner, this would have a wide-ranging impact upon how we should approach and interpret the text. Indeed, we can read Schopenhauer's philosophy as expressed

from the aesthetic standpoint, despite “closer inspection [revealing] a dearth of explicit remarks that would connect philosophy to aesthetic perception” (2013, 58), as Vasalou admits.

The difficulty with this approach is that it tempts one to conflate (or at the very least, intrinsically connect) Schopenhauer’s notion of Idea with that of a concept, which is that which constitutes the knowledge of reason. Vasalou offers an argument in favour of construing the distinction between Idea and concept in Schopenhauer’s philosophy as being less sharply defined than is usually recognised, by relying upon the notion that, though the official position is that the Ideas lie outside of time (Schopenhauer states that, when considering the Ideas, “we need to abstract from all temporal relation, since this concerns only the appearance of the Idea, not the Idea itself” (WWR1, 190)), nevertheless there is the sense of an Idea only being fully grasped through the observation of its manifestation over time:

on the higher levels [the Idea] needs a whole series of states and developments in time in order to appear; only taken together do these states and developments complete the expression of its essence . . . [and] even the plant does not express the Idea (whose appearance it is) all at once and through a simple expression, but rather in the temporal succession of the development of its organs. (WWR1, 184–85)

Due to the revelation of the Idea in such a manner, in the form of successive observations over time, Vasalou argues that, from Schopenhauer’s perspective,

the boundary between rational concepts and intuitively known Ideas begins to look even less hermetic. For if time is a concept of reason—a form that belongs to the principle of sufficient reason—one might justly wonder how the perception of an entity that involves temporal progression could fail to be ‘rational’ on Schopenhauer’s terms. (2013, 28–29)

Thus, we must reconceive the manner in which the artist contemplates the Idea. Instead of the traditional interpretation of the aesthetic object “as an image of perception present to the observer’s instantaneous gaze” (2013, 29), we must see it as something that is not bounded by the present, but nevertheless is in time (following the developmental view of the Idea being grasped through its manifestation over time). As such, artistic contemplation does not take place in an instantaneous moment of intuitive insight. Instead, the artist’s contemplation of the Idea should be read as intrinsically involving the form of time, which is a form of reason, leading to the possibility of reading concept and Idea as much closer in Schopenhauer’s system than is usually recognised.

Though we can grant that the relation between Idea and concept in Schopenhauer's philosophy is not straightforward,<sup>2</sup> there are a few points we can put in objection to Vasalou's account. To begin with, we need to pay close attention to the context in which Schopenhauer is speaking of the Ideas, in that sometimes he speaks of the Ideas in relation to aesthetics, which is from the subjective standpoint, and at other times in relation to the manifestation of the Ideas in nature, which should be read as from the objective standpoint. Vasalou's key quotation, reproduced above, concerning the expression of the essences of things in nature, does not come in a discussion of aesthetics (which takes up much of Book 3 of *WWRI*); rather, it comes in Book 2, in a discussion of the possibility of discerning the will through our experience of nature. If we are going to posit a very strong link between philosophical insight and aesthetic engagement, we need to be very careful to ensure that any passages we rely upon are speaking of the Ideas from the subjective standpoint of aesthetic engagement, rather than in the context of objective reflections upon nature.

Further to this, we can see a clear distinction between Idea and concept in Schopenhauer's early notes: "Plato says: 'the Ideas alone really *are*; everything else only appears to be.' And some (especially Herbart) have nevertheless given them out as mere *concepts*, that is to say as representations of representations! But they are the form of things which are plastic and graphic and yet universal as well" (MR1, 142). Given the clear distinction drawn here, we should be careful to avoid conflating the possibility of the cognition of the Idea by the pure subject of knowing with the necessary step that the philosopher takes in conceptualising their philosophical insights using the faculty of reason.<sup>3</sup> We cannot, therefore, construe the transition from intuition to concept in such positive terms as Vasalou presents them, and Schopenhauer certainly did not view this movement in his philosophy as a movement to a higher standpoint, where we can gain 'knowledge of reason.'

There is much to be said in favour of an aestheticist reading of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, as he certainly sees affinities between the role of the philosopher and that of the artist, particularly insofar as they both take intuitive insights, available to them due to heightened intellectual abilities, and make a publicly-accessible product which is aimed at inspiring the same sort of experiences in others. Through a painting (for example), the artist is ideally going to inspire the same kind of experience of the Ideas in the viewer as inspired the artistic process, while through the text, the philosopher may be able to inspire others to the same metaphysical insights that underlies their reflection and work. Such a reading is supported when Schopenhauer notes the shared fundamental epistemic ground of philosophy and the arts: "For only what has originated from perception, and more particularly from purely objective perception, or immediately aroused by it, contains the living

seed from which genuine and original achievements can grow: not only in the plastic and pictorial arts but also in poetry, indeed even in philosophy” (WWR2, 422). Schopenhauer thereby affirms essential parallels between art and philosophy, in that both stem from deep insights available only to a few, from which great achievements can flow: Be it a beautiful artwork or poem, which is effective in provoking apprehension of the Ideas, or a philosophical text, which expresses in an effective manner a metaphysical system that to some extent captures the underlying intuitive insights achieved by the philosopher.

As an example that illustrates the similarities between the working-methods of the artist and the philosopher, we can focus on the production of an artwork, such as a painting, and a philosophical text. Jacquette has identified three stages to the process of producing an artwork in Schopenhauer’s account, which he calls the “perception-completion/perfection-expression” (2005, 149) model, which certainly generally fits the trajectory from intuition to abstraction, which we are familiar with from our discussion of Schopenhauer’s claims regarding the production of philosophical texts.

However, though there is much to be said for aestheticist readings, and they are certainly an interesting and potentially fruitful approach to the interpretation of Schopenhauer, one should not stretch these parallels too far. Philosophy and art are ultimately somewhat disconnected in Schopenhauer’s system, to the extent that we should resist any characterisation of his metaphilosophy as treating the ‘philosopher as artist.’

To illustrate this, we can note some important differences in terms of the reception of art and philosophy by the individual who is not the original artist or philosopher. As Schopenhauer has it, the function of the artwork is to directly facilitate the apprehension of the Ideas by the individual, and art, as an expression of completed abstract notions of the Ideas, is actually more effective in engendering will-less apprehension of the Ideas than any ordinary experience of the world: “The Ideas of beings more easily speak to us from works of art than from actual reality. For what we behold only in an image or in poetry stands outside all possibility of any relation to our will” (WWR2, 420).

Focusing on poetry (which may seem the prime candidate for any affinity between philosophy and a particular art-form, as Vasalou argues [see 2013, 65–67]), Schopenhauer states that the particular effectiveness of a poetic image may lie in it giving us a slightly illusory picture of the world. A similar effect to that of poetry is found through travel to new places, where we enjoy an apparently magical experience before we have had time to grasp the truthful reality of the place in question:

It is precisely this that makes a perceived object seem *picturesque*, an event of actual life *poetic*, in that only this spreads that magic shimmer over the objects of actual reality, which, in the case of sensibly perceived objects, is called the picturesque, in the case of those viewed only in imagination, the poetic . . . [That] the novel and complete foreignness of objects is also favourable to such a disinterested, purely objective apprehension explains why the stranger, or mere passing traveller, gets the effect of the picturesque or poetic from objects that are unable to produce it in the locals. (WWR2, 421–22)

There is a sense in which works of art achieve their specific effect from a disassociation with the world, in an analogous way to how a tourist may react favourably to an illusory experience of a new place. Artworks present the world in a different manner from the everyday, with the result that they are more effective in generating apprehension of the Ideas than normal experience. However, this can be achieved through an illusory image of the world.

Such a view is in contrast to how Schopenhauer presents the transmission and reception of philosophy. To begin with, there is no sense of the philosophical text itself directly facilitating intuitive insight in the manner of artworks. Though we may wish to speak of the reading of philosophical texts as potentially inspiring individuals with regard to the independent generation of intuitive insight, this is not the kind of direct process postulated by Schopenhauer in his aesthetics. Further, unlike a poetic image, a metaphysical system should not present an illusory picture of the world, even if it is just a ‘magic shimmer over the objects of actual reality.’ As we have seen, metaphysical systems have the duty to be true *sensu stricto et proprio*, and thus no illusory aspect in the presentation of a metaphysical system can be allowed.

At best, the picture of the world presented to us through a painting or a poem may be better understood in parallel with the manner in which religion presents truths about the world through a veil of allegory. As noted before, religion can certainly reflect metaphysical truths, in a similar way to which engagement with artworks can reveal the Ideas (with the exception of music), though with a protective layer, such that the essence of the world is not revealed in an immediate manner. Poetic and beautiful images seem to function in a similar way to religious allegory by presenting the truth in an indirect way, with an inevitably illusory aspect (be it the illusion of a poetic image or the myths of the actions of religious figures). As such, in terms of Schopenhauer’s view, art is more closely connected to religion than to philosophy, and thus an exclusively or strongly aestheticist construal of Schopenhauer’s metaphilosophy may be misleading to some extent. However, to reiterate, I have no desire to state that aestheticist readings of Schopenhauer have nothing to offer us and indeed they may open up interesting avenues of research. I would argue though that whatever the extent of

Schopenhauer's aestheticist approach to metaphilosophy, it does not exhaust his metaphilosophy.

Another recent aestheticist approach to Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy has been suggested by Shapshay (2014), who argues for a 'symbiotic relationship' between philosophy and the arts within the metaphysics of will. As Shapshay states, for Schopenhauer, artworks may have a certain advantage, in terms of the communication of intuitive insight, over philosophical texts: "The most faithful way to communicate intuitive cognition *without* the loss of content inherent in the process of translation into rational knowledge is to capture and communicate it in a *genuine work of expressive art*" (2014, 55). Whereas philosophers must accept that something is going to be lost in translation when they attempt to conceptualise their intuitive insights, with a view to communicating it to others, the potential communicative ability of an expressive artist does not face such challenges, as "[if] a person appreciates a genuine work of art in a suitably disinterested manner . . . the intuitive knowledge embodied in a work of art may be communicated . . . by being reproduced afresh in the experience of the aesthetic subject" (ibid.). Thus, there is a way in which artworks can more directly inspire intuitive insight than a philosophical text, due to the limits of language and conceptualisation. So, why state that the relationship between art and philosophy is symbiotic? It might seem that, due to the advantages of art, the philosopher should try picking up a paintbrush, rather than a pen, the next time they wish to communicate their intuitive insights.

In response to this worry, Shapshay states that philosophy has some advantages over the expressive arts: for example, cognition garnered from artworks are "*fleeting* precisely because it is intuitive rather than conceptual . . . gained in the imaginative engagement with the work itself, and does not long outlast that experience" (2014, 57). One important difference between a philosophical text and an artwork is that conceptual knowledge from the former can be more easily retained, and later retrieved, than cognition from the latter, such that one need not return regularly to the philosophical text, yet may need to directly aesthetically engage with the artwork in question on multiple occasions. The memory of ideas garnered from a philosophical text can continually inspire us, in a manner unavailable through direct experience of a work of art.

In addition, Shapshay argues that, for Schopenhauer, aesthetic cognition lacks the kind of completeness that is potentially offered by a system of metaphysics: "In addition to its fleetingness, artistic knowledge is fragmentary, offering insight into examples of life, parts rather than the whole. The task of philosophy, by contrast is to offer knowledge of life that is 'permanent' because conceptual and *complete* because systematic" (2014, 58). Philosophy has the advantage of meeting the need for metaphysics by offering the kind

of complete explanation that we are looking for, in addition to being required to make up for the shortcomings of the communication of intuitive insight in artworks, which is fleeting and fragmentary. On this account, philosophy and the arts have complementary roles: art provides insight into the Ideas and maybe even the essence of the world (in the case of music), in a manner which is fleeting and incomplete, but perhaps more obviously accessible to a wider range of people, while a philosophical text can also help inspire intuitive insight in a more complete manner, though in a less accessible and direct way. Such a complementary model of the relation between art and philosophy certainly coheres well with the metaphilosophical interpretation offered in this work.

However, Shapshay wishes to bring the connection between the philosophy and arts even closer, to that of a symbiotic relationship, which involves a different model of the role of the philosopher than that offered here. Shapshay argues that the philosopher has to rely upon aesthetic experience themselves as an epistemic source for their metaphysics:

the philosopher might be able to make some progress systematizing intuitive knowledge garnered from testimony, from her own experience, from the sciences, and from other philosophers, but if she does not engage the expressive arts, she will lack the kind of intuitive cognition of the essential and enduring features of the world and life that is needed to make real progress in philosophy. (2014, 59)

Aesthetic engagement is the only way in which the philosopher is able to garner key intuitive insights, particularly regarding ‘the essential and enduring features of the world,’ the Ideas, which mark the grades of manifestation of the will. The aesthetic experiences available to us are therefore a vital part of Schopenhauer’s understanding of philosophical method, according to this reading.

In response, while we can agree with Shapshay that the philosopher may find aesthetic contemplation of great help with regard to garnering intuitive insight, we should resist aesthetic engagement as having a necessary, irreplaceable role in substantial progress in philosophy. As far as I am aware, there is no passage in which Schopenhauer explicitly makes such a claim regarding the dependence of philosophy on art, and Shapshay does not offer us one. Further to this, the story Schopenhauer tells us of the development of his own system does not reveal a necessary role for aesthetic contemplation. From the autobiographical material left by Schopenhauer, it seems that the pessimistic impetus for his system came from the everyday experiences of the world around him. As a teenager, Schopenhauer famously went on a European tour with his parents, in return for agreeing to follow in his father’s



footsteps and become a merchant,<sup>4</sup> and was struck by the overwhelming misery and degradation he experienced:

When I was seventeen, without any proper schooling, I was affected by the *misery and wretchedness of life*, as was the Buddha when in his youth he caught sight of sickness, old age, pain and death. The truth which the world clearly and loudly proclaimed soon threw off the Jewish dogmas that had been stamped on my mind, and the result for me was that this world could not be the work of an all-bountiful, infinitely good being, but rather of a devil who had summoned into existence creatures in order to gloat over the sight of their anguish and agony. The data were suggestive of this and the belief that it was so gained the upper hand. (MR4, 119)

Schopenhauer makes clear that the pessimistic insights that drive the core of his philosophy were not garnered through aesthetic engagement, but merely through ordinary experience of the world around him, which was enough to ‘clearly and loudly proclaim’ the terrible truths of the world. The data he garnered from his tour was ‘suggestive’ of his pessimism, and was sufficient to convince him of it, apart from any role for aesthetic engagement. Therefore, Schopenhauer’s very own description of the origins of his philosophical commitment to pessimism tells against any necessary role for aesthetic engagement for substantial progress in philosophy.

At the same time, Schopenhauer’s own example does show the importance of art for the philosopher: as Foster notes, “far more than Kant, Hegel, and even Schelling, Schopenhauer cultivated an active and informed appreciation for the arts and thus avoided the remote theoretical distance more characteristic of his predecessors’ works [on aesthetics]” (1999, 233). Nevertheless, looking at the way in which Schopenhauer developed the metaphysics of will, we cannot see a necessary role for art in relation to making substantial progress in philosophy. We can certainly follow Shapshay, though, in interpreting Schopenhauer as positing a complementary, fruitful relation between philosophy and the arts, as exemplified in his own life.

To sum up, though aestheticist interpretations of Schopenhauer’s metaphilosophy are certainly very interesting on their own merits, I argue that they do not accurately reflect his views of the underlying methods of philosophy. Art was undoubtedly very important to Schopenhauer, but I argue only insofar as it offers a possible avenue for temporarily quelling the will within us and achieving a brief kind of peace from the incessant pull of our desires. Philosophy’s role in offering explanation and consolation (as I have outlined in this work) is rather different to artistic working-methods and the character of aesthetic experience, as Schopenhauer understands it. Thus, we should be wary of overemphasizing the overlap between art and philosophy in

Schopenhauer's thought, given the distinctive and nuanced account he offers us of how philosophy ought to be done.

## METAPHYSICAL SPECULATION AND METAPHOR

In addition to his aesthetics, Schopenhauer's use of metaphor has also inspired metaphilosophical reflections upon his work. Schopenhauer is keen to emphasise that his philosophical works observe the limits of language and communication. However, due to his desire to communicate something of his metaphysical insights more effectively, he seemingly has to rely upon the use of metaphor. Such an approach raises questions regarding Schopenhauer's underlying conception of philosophical method and communication. In this section, I will consider some metaphorical readings of Schopenhauer's philosophy that has been offered by various scholars and examine how his use of metaphor fits into the metaphilosophical interpretation offered in this work.

An example of Schopenhauer admitting to the use of metaphor in his work is the use of the term 'will' in relation to the thing in itself, which he discusses in one of his final letters, to Sikič and Schramek. In this letter, Schopenhauer discusses fallaciously reasoning in a manner that straightforwardly applies the term 'will' as we use it in relation to appearance to the thing in itself. Schopenhauer states that, in using the term 'will' in relation to thing in itself, he is not extending the scope of the concept beyond its legitimate sphere of application (see GB, 503). Due to the fact that metaphysical reflections are focused on the limits of phenomenal explanation, it is tempting to take concepts, which can only be legitimately applied within the phenomenal realm, and attempt to employ them transcendently, beyond their sphere of proper application. Such is the trap that some readers of Schopenhauer may fall into, and thus they need to remind themselves of our epistemic limits.

The concept 'will' should not be understood as applied in a straightforward manner to a transcendent object, but rather metaphorically, building upon the experiential basis we have to inquire in a limited way into the essence of the world. Schopenhauer states that he has avoided speaking directly of the transcendent and that he only makes metaphysical claims to the extent that is possible from experience alone. Thus, he is not attempting to extend the concept 'will' beyond its legitimate sphere of application, in his identification of the thing in itself with will. The limits of his claims concerning the will are limited to its appearance and its affirmation (see *ibid.*). All the metaphysical claims Schopenhauer has made are grounded in the world of appearance, so we can deal only with those aspects of the will (as essence of the world) which manifest themselves in the phenomenal realm. As we have noted before, Schopenhauer believes that we can cognize something of the

will from features of our experience, both inner and outer, and he claims no more regarding the essence of the world beyond this basis of evidence. Such an epistemically humble stance includes not only Schopenhauer's identification of the thing in itself with will, but also his doctrine of the denial or negation of the will, which is grounded in testimony of those rare individuals who have achieved this state, as well as expanding upon any experience which may have to a limited extent undermined the principle of individuation, such as engagement with works of art. Beyond the cognizance which this evidence grants us of the denial of the will and the essence of the world, Schopenhauer claims to go no further.

Further evidence from the correspondence that Schopenhauer allows at least some of his claims to be metaphorical in nature comes in a discussion concerning his moral theory of compassion. As part of his extensive correspondence with his 'disciple,' Johann August Becker,<sup>5</sup> Schopenhauer attempts to defend his theory from a key objection regarding the potential basis of compassion in egoism, which he cannot allow. In *BM*, Schopenhauer argues that the only virtuous motive for action is compassion and that usually, egoist motivation rules the day:

[one] may posit whatever one wishes as the ultimate motivating ground of an action: it will always turn out in the end that by some roundabout route or other the genuine incentive is *the agent's own well-being and woe*, that the action is therefore *egoistic* and consequently *without moral worth*. There is only one single case in which this does not take place: that is, if the ultimate motivating ground for an action, or an omission, resides directly and exclusively in the *well-being and woe* of someone *other* who is passively involved in it . . . *This end alone* impresses on an action or omission the stamp of *moral worth*. (*BM*, 207)

Schopenhauer identifies four fundamental kinds of motivation, including a desire for another's weal (compassion), a desire for another's woe (malice<sup>6</sup>), a desire for one's own weal (direct egoism), and a desire for one's own woe.<sup>7</sup> Further to this, he argues that compassionate actions are based on a recognition that the principle of individuation is illusory, and thus that another individual is in fact identical in essence with you.

Schopenhauer recognises an objection to his account of compassion that notes that, insofar as it is grounded in a recognition of yourself in another individual, it might suggest that it is in fact a source of egoistic motivation (see *GB*, 204). Cartwright pithily sums up the objection thus: "If compassion proceeds from a person's recognizing others as an 'I once more,' is not compassion ultimately egoistic, because the compassionate person is ultimately just helping him-or herself?" (2010, 510). However, Schopenhauer claims that his explication of compassion as involving the recognition of another's

suffering as one's own (which might seem to beg the objection of an egoism underlying a supposed non-egoistic compassion) is in fact metaphorical in nature and should not be taken literally. The appearance of egoism in compassion is erroneously taken from a literal understanding of what is supposed to be a metaphorical claim (see GB, 204).

Another example of Schopenhauer potentially admitting to the use of metaphor in his correspondence with Becker comes in relation to his account of the intelligible character and the denial of the will. The denial of the will is construed as a timeless event that takes place in relation to the intelligible character, but Becker raises the worry that it violates Kantian epistemic limits to make such claims regarding the activity of the intelligible character. Schopenhauer argues that he has maintained the appropriate level of epistemic humility, by only referring to the intelligible character in the role of a mere symbol or allegory, and not as 'objective truth' (see GB, 202). This passage, again, seems to show Schopenhauer maintaining that he has made use of a 'figurative expression,' at least along the lines of a metaphor, in order to explicate his philosophical system and continue upon his immanent (not transcendent) metaphilosophical path.

Taking Schopenhauer's argument that compassion is grounded in the recognition of 'I, once more' in another being, and his positing the intelligible character as a timeless act of will, as metaphorical in some sense, raises the question of the precise manner in which Schopenhauer uses metaphors in his work. One particularly persuasive interpretation in this regard is Neeley's claim that some of the key metaphysical claims in *WWR* make use of incremental metaphor (see 2003, 64–71). Speaking generally, we can follow Swinburne's argument that a metaphor arises,

when a word or words are not used in any pre-existing senses, nor in any new sense given an explicit definition, but where knowledge of a wide context—a lot of information about where the token sentence containing the word was uttered, by whom, in what circumstances, against what background of common assumptions—will reveal what is being said. The sense is a new one, generated by the context and by the previous established senses of the word together. (1992, 43)

Metaphors are used to give new senses to particular words, which can only be discerned by the individual receiving the communication through an understanding of the original sense of the words and a certain amount of background information concerning the context of the utterance. If Schopenhauer is making metaphysical claims that are metaphorical in nature, he will therefore be using terms in a new sense, relying upon us to use what we already know of him and his philosophical project to discern this new sense ourselves. We can

thus see Schopenhauer's use of metaphor as feeding into the kind of active readership of his works that I discussed earlier.

Though the question of metaphor in language is highly complex, we can split their use into three main groups (following Soskice 1985): 1) a 'substitution metaphor,' in which a metaphor is used in a 'decorative' manner to say what could be said literally; 2) an 'emotive metaphor,' in which a metaphor is used for a particular affective impact, without providing its own unique cognitive content; and 3) an 'incremental metaphor,' which represents "a new and cognitively unique agent of meaning" (Neeley 2003, 65), which could not be communicated in any other manner. Under the incremental model, a metaphor can be used, as a complete speech act, to extend our cognition by capturing in language something that cannot be expressed in a literal manner. Such metaphors are therefore non-reducible to literal language and have the ability to extend our understanding beyond that which can be captured literally.<sup>8</sup>

Neeley focuses his account of metaphor in Schopenhauer's philosophy on the key claim of the identification of the thing in itself with will. Noting Schopenhauer's concept-empiricism, he writes, "if the noumenon is not an item of perception, how can it be granted a name (signifying a concept) or otherwise be the subject of meaningful discourse?" (2003, 68)<sup>9</sup> Neeley argues that the individual will is used as a limiting concept, which is extended by Schopenhauer through incremental metaphor:

individual human will is employed . . . as a model. By utilizing this model and by expanding the reach of the term 'will,' Schopenhauer generates a metaphor capable of conveying genuine insight, which could be adequately expressed in no other way. The word 'will,' as extended, not only expands our lexicon but our conceptual apparatus. The will becomes a means of interpreting the world; it coaxes fresh avenues of understanding, provides the parameters of speculation, and generates a unique and encompassing philosophical paradigm. (2003, 71)

The term 'will,' derived through inner perception, literally denotes the human will guided by motives. But the will of which I am conscious is only one end of the spectrum; the will need not be (and generally is not) accompanied by consciousness. Schopenhauer therefore extends the reach of the term 'will' to include, *inter alia*, all the forces of nature and the will bereft of motives. But in so doing, Schopenhauer does not merely extend the denotation of the term. Indeed, if this were the case, it would still imply that the thing in itself were somehow perceptible. Rather, Schopenhauer re-directs the reach of the term 'will' away from distinct phenomena, and back toward that non-rational, impersonal, blind striving which lies at the root of all phenomena. (2003, 73)

Despite a certain amount of plausibility, Neeley's case for reading the identification of will as thing in itself as an incremental metaphor is not obviously correct, in that such a metaphorical reading of Schopenhauer's

key metaphysical claims faces some difficulties, as we shall see. I argue that such difficulties can be overcome, though, and that we can understand Schopenhauer as employing a number of different rhetorical devices in relation to the explication of his system, while maintaining his various other commitments concerning the nature of concepts and the communication of philosophical insights through language.

There is certainly good reason to read some of Schopenhauer's key metaphysical claims as metaphorical in character, in that he is aware of both the power and the limits of language, as well as the difficulties facing the philosopher in attempting to conceptualise and communicate the metaphysical insights that they have gained through reflection upon their intuition. F. C. White (1992) links Schopenhauer's potential use of metaphor in the explication of his system to his commitment to concept-empiricism, which seems to suggest that the use of the concept 'will' in relation to an unperceivable thing in itself would be illegitimate. White proposes that Schopenhauer understands the statement of this key metaphysical claim, in relation to his concept-empiricism, in this way:

The concept of *will* is derived from perception, from inner perception, and is in similar fashion verifiable by perception. It is therefore genuine. However, although it is genuine, it cannot be applied literally to the noumenal, nor can it license literal talk of the noumenal, since the noumenal is imperceptible. But it can be applied to it metaphorically. (White 1992, 91)

We certainly seem to have a plausible picture here of how Schopenhauer can balance his desire to make claims regarding the thing in itself with his commitment to concept-empiricism, namely, by borrowing concepts that are grounded in perception, both inner and outer, and applying them metaphorically to that which may be beyond our perception. If we assume that some metaphors are not translatable into literal terms, White argues, we can construe Schopenhauer's position as holding that, "we have perceptual knowledge of the phenomenal world, from which we derive our concepts and their terms and against which we test them; and we have another sort of knowledge, of the noumenal world—it is 'empirically given'—which no terms can describe literally, but which some describe metaphorically" (1992, 92). Thus, White seems to be assuming the 'incremental metaphor' model, in which metaphors can be used to communicate something that cannot be communicated in any other way: for example, he states that "some metaphors cannot be translated into literal expressions, any more than commands can be translated into statements" (*ibid.*). As such, we can interpret White as proposing a similar interpretation<sup>10</sup> to that proposed by Neeley (2003), discussed above.

However, Schopenhauer faces a potential objection related to his use of metaphor, insofar as it appears that he may have been violating his own metaphilosophical approach. As we can recall from chapter 1, philosophy has the duty to express its truths in a direct manner, which appears to conflict with Schopenhauer's own use of metaphor. In fact, given Schopenhauer's characterisation of religion as reliant upon allegory, he may be unwittingly painting his system as more a work of religion than of philosophy. Cartwright poses the objection in this way:

The sharp distinction between religion and philosophy, both of which, Schopenhauer claimed, sought a metaphysical explanation of a world seeped in suffering and death, balanced on his claim that religion expressed its truth allegorically, whereas philosophy had to present its truths *sensu stricto et proprio*. It now appears that Schopenhauer was made to realize that his use of metaphor signified that he was also attempting to advance our cognitive stock through some other means. (2010, 511)

We seemingly have a couple of problems here. First of all, it may look like Schopenhauer is violating his Humean-inspired claim that meaningful philosophical discourse must be grounded in our experience, both inner and outer. If Schopenhauer is using metaphors, as cognitive acts with their own unique content, to describe his system, it seems that philosophy can operate meaningfully apart from intuition, purely at the conceptual level. Second, as Cartwright correctly notes, it is supposed to be religion, not philosophy, which has to 'make do' with metaphor, allegory, and so forth. Thus, by using metaphor in his own philosophy, it may appear that he is collapsing his philosophy into religion and implicitly allowing that both have to rely upon the indirect communicative methods of metaphor and allegory.

The question of the relation between metaphor and analogy is not straightforward, though, and Schopenhauer argues that religion deals primarily with analogies, instead of metaphors. As such, it may be that the potential use of metaphor in the context of the metaphysics of will does not reduce it to religion in the manner Cartwright suggests. As Swinburne states, the new sense given to a word in a metaphor "may be analogical with the old one or it may not" (1992, 43), so the distinction between metaphor and analogy is not necessarily clear-cut (see also 1992, 48–9). We do not need to worry any further about this potentially complex issue in the philosophy of language, as I argue that we can preserve Schopenhauer's distinction between philosophy and religion even if the distinction between metaphor and analogy is blurred and we interpret him as making metaphorical claims. Of course, if we could show a strict separation between metaphor and analogy, then we could argue that Schopenhauer sees religion as fundamentally allegorical in nature, and

philosophy as at least partly metaphorical in nature, and so the distinction is preserved; however, due to the complexity of the issues involved, which would take us far away from our focus on Schopenhauer, I will not pursue this argument in detail here.

However, we can consider Sebastian Gardner's view that metaphor and analogy can be readily distinguished, with regard to the potential identification of the thing-in-itself as will, as the different kinds of cognition involved require differing amounts of background information. Gardner argues that, "analogical cognition—moving predicates across the sensible/supersensible divide—can get going only once the two domains have already been established. If I am to think A on the analogy with B, then A must already be posited, hence must be *thinkable*" (2017, 22). However, if we read Schopenhauer's key metaphysical claims as metaphorical in character,

then we do not commit ourselves to specifying the likeness which underpins it [i.e. the proposed connection between world as will and world as representation], but only to *exhibiting* the route by which we *arrive* at it—this is the only sense in which we are bound to justify discursively the metaphorical transference of intra-representational grounding to extra-representational relations. (Gardner 2017, 24)

Thus, the epistemological foundation required for metaphorical cognition is much reduced, in contrast to construing Schopenhauer as using analogy to ground his major metaphysical claims. With analogical claims, both sides of the thing in itself/appearance distinction need to be thinkable, while with metaphorical claims, we can stay on the side of appearance, merely using what is available to us through our experience and pointing to aspects of that experience that could give some intimation of something lying beyond it.

We can only follow Gardner so far, though, in that he takes a metaphorical construal of Schopenhauer's key metaphysical claims as committing us to stating that "to think the world as will is not, formally speaking, to *judge* any state of affairs" (ibid.). In line with some current aestheticist readings of Schopenhauer, which we have already discussed, Gardner states that the notion of the world as will, in the context of Schopenhauer's system, should be taken as an 'expressive quasi-thought,' in which a traditional validation of metaphysics is abandoned in favour of an 'aesthetic force,' parallel to the manner in which artworks grant us cognition of the Ideas in Schopenhauer's aesthetics (see Gardner 2017, 24–25). The problem with such an approach is that, as Gardner admits (see Gardner 2017, 25), such an interpretation of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy is lacking in evidence from the text. The few passages Gardner does reference do very little to establish such a



metaphilosophy, and thus I would argue that an aestheticist metaphilosophy, as a potential interpretation of Schopenhauer, should be avoided if at all possible.

In order to extricate Schopenhauer from these related difficulties, and to avoid an aestheticist interpretation of his metaphilosophy, we need to construe his use of metaphor in such a way that he retains his commitment to legitimate philosophical discourse being grounded in intuition, as well as philosophy being able to be true *sensu stricto et proprio*, so that it can be strictly divided from religion. I propose that the key to resolving this difficulty lies in the kind of metaphor Schopenhauer is using, and in the distinction between philosophical insight (at the level of intuition) and the conceptualisation and communication of philosophy.

First, we can allow that Schopenhauer understands himself as using metaphors in the incremental sense, but only in the way that a metaphor can be used to point towards a philosophical insight in a manner that cannot be achieved in any other way through communication. Such a metaphor is not being used to directly increase our philosophical understanding per se; rather, Schopenhauer has decided that the metaphor in question can be used as the most powerful tool with which to inspire the reader to come to the same philosophical insight themselves, which is the original intuitive insight which underlies the later conceptualisation in the form of a metaphor. So, while a metaphor is being used as a unique tool for philosophical inspiration (thus extending the potential impact of the philosophical text upon the reader), *it is not extending metaphysical insight itself*. We thus need to remember the important metaphilosophical distinction, for Schopenhauer, between the intuition and conceptualisation of metaphysical truths: While metaphor can have an important role to play in the conceptualisation of philosophy, it does not have a role to play in individuals grasping metaphysical truths themselves through intuition.

Thus, Schopenhauer is still committed to his view that legitimate philosophical discourse is grounded in intuition, and that a system of philosophical insights itself has the duty to be true *sensu stricto et proprio*, even though metaphors can be used to help communicate insights at the level of concepts. The difference between philosophy and religion is also preserved, in that we must recall that religion is for those who are not capable of achieving clear metaphysical insights at the intuitive level due to the more limited nature of their natural intellectual capacities. Thus, religion will always remain at the level of abstraction and metaphor, whereas philosophy must not do so, even though it may occasionally call upon metaphor and allegorical expression in the attempt to communicate with others, with a view to inspiring metaphysical insight in those who are capable of it. In this way, we can state that Schopenhauer's use of metaphor in the explication of his system does not

conflict with his views regarding the distinction between religion and philosophy, as well as the requirement to base genuine philosophical discourse in intuition.

Finally, Shapshay also responds to a potential problem with a metaphorical reading of Schopenhauer's philosophy, in that it would seem difficult for him to claim that we can garner genuine cognition of something of the thing in itself while relying upon metaphor: "That which is being predicated of the thing in itself, is itself of sensible origin [i.e. willing], but how can Schopenhauer claim that such a metaphorical identification constitutes *knowledge* of the thing in itself, and isn't just . . . a mere dressing up of the thing in itself by means of a 'poetic intuition'?" (2009, 63). It seems highly questionable that a metaphorical identification of thing in itself with will could count as knowledge: indeed, it might seem more like poetry, which might be very nice in itself, but nevertheless may not be actually revealing anything about the essence of the world, which Schopenhauer would like his metaphysics of will to do, at least to some extent.

To reinforce the point, Shapshay has us consider an example of metaphorical identification, 'Juliet is the sun,' alongside a standard identity statement, such as 'Water is H<sub>2</sub>O':

The latter declares something that is literally the case about the world, and the 'is' is symmetrical; whereas, the former is not to be properly understood if taken literally, but rather, constitutes an invitation to imagine and play with the relevant similarities of Juliet and the sun, and to share, to some extent, the powerful feelings that would move the speaker to make such an identification. Further, the metaphorical 'is' is asymmetrical: 'Juliet is the sun' does not entail that 'the sun is Juliet.' Given these features of metaphorical identification, why should 'the thing in itself is will,' if taken metaphorically, count as a claim to knowledge rather than as a bit of poetry? (ibid.)

There is clearly a difference between a normal identity statement, which can straightforwardly reveal some truth about how things are, and a metaphorical identity statement that may be grounded in a potentially imaginative thought, with no necessary foundation in fact. So, if we construe some of Schopenhauer's key metaphysical claims as metaphorical in nature, we may be led to wondering if he is making genuine claims, or just indulging in an imaginative piece of poetry.

Given such a problem, Shapshay suggests that Schopenhauer's identity statement, 'the thing in itself is will' is metonymical in nature, as a "figure of speech in which the name of one thing stands for another thing with which it is either closely associated, or with which it is actually contiguous" (ibid.). Metonymy functions by playing upon the association of certain terms, for

example, where someone in business is referred to as a ‘suit,’ or ‘the crown’ is used to refer to the monarchy, and the ‘free-play’ of such associations can be exploited to communicate ideas in a manner which cannot be communicated in another way.

In defence of her interpretation, Shapshay (see 2009, 64–65) points to Schopenhauer’s claim that the term ‘will’ is used *denominatio a potiori* with regard to the thing in itself:

If we are to think objectively about this thing in itself, it must borrow its name and concept from an object, from something that is somehow objectively given, and thus from one of its appearances . . . the human *will*. It is nonetheless fair to say that we are only using a denomination from the superior term [*denominatio a potiori*] that gives the concept of will a broader scope than it has had before. (WWR1, 131–32)

Shapshay argues that Schopenhauer’s explicit reference to *denominatio a potiori*, which she glosses as “after or according to the main part or feature does a thing get its name” (2009, 65), confirms that he is using metonymy, rather than metaphor, in his identification of the thing in itself with will. Through the association of ideas connected to our experience of our own willing, we may be able to ‘feel,’ in a manner not available through any other label for the thing in itself, the way in which the essence of the world touches upon an aspect of our mental life: “By use of this metonymic device . . . [Schopenhauer] hopes that we will take away an insight that we could not have gotten in any other way than by feeling it, from the inside, so to speak.” (ibid.)

Such an interpretation of the status of some of Schopenhauer’s key metaphysical claims is very promising, insofar as we can maintain Schopenhauer’s commitment to epistemic humility and concept-empiricism, while providing a model of how the communication of philosophical ideas can help bring the individual to come to insight themselves: philosophical texts can be used to communicate phenomenally grounded concepts, which in turn can aid the reader, through the association of ideas, to come to philosophical insight themselves, ideally parallel to the original insight which the philosopher sought to communicate to others. Therefore, it is certainly an interesting, and potentially valuable, way of approaching Schopenhauer’s philosophy of language in relation to his epistemological commitments and the intended impact of the explication of his system upon the individual. However, given the discussion above, I do not believe that we have to rule out Schopenhauer’s use of metaphor alongside a potential use of metonymy in the communication of his philosophy; given his undeniable literary prowess, it seems likely that

Schopenhauer is happy to use a number of different rhetorical devices in his attempt to convey his philosophy in as effective manner as possible.

To sum up, Schopenhauer uses both metaphor and metonymy as part of his philosophical toolkit at the conceptual level, to aid the kind of active readership of his works that is required. His use of such linguistic devices does not violate his claim that philosophy must be true *sensu stricto et proprio* and allows him to respect the epistemic bounds set by his underlying metaphilosophy. In connection with Schopenhauer's use of metaphor and metonymy, we will continue to consider the style of his works (and what this tells us about his metaphilosophy) in the following section,

### THE STYLE OF SCHOPENHAUER'S WORKS

We have examined Schopenhauer's account of the intended impact of his texts upon the individual who seeks the insights that he has attempted to communicate: indeed, one could hardly wish for a more radical change in one's life than that individual who has achieved denial or negation of the will. Such a view of a philosophical education will have significant implications for how one goes about writing a philosophical text. Due to the fundamental change in the individual that the author is trying to instigate through the text, some form of implicit 'nudging' will be required, underlying whatever doctrines might be presented on the surface. As Melzer puts it, a forthright style in philosophical texts is not always the most effective:

[an] open and straightforward approach to [philosophical] education that simply lays out the truth will not work. The student must be moved along gradually, artfully, in appropriate stages. This dialectical process will require withholding or managing the truth, so that the student is compelled to find it for himself, at his pace, and in a form he can, at each stage, digest. (2014, 91)

A philosophical text constructed in this manner will be carefully planned, and have a gradual narrative arc to it, in which the reader is gently led along from perhaps more conventional ideas, towards a deep philosophical insight which is internalised to the extent that it has a fundamental impact upon the life and character of the individual engaging with the text. We find such a narrative in Schopenhauer's works.

*The World as Will and Representation*, where Schopenhauer outlines his metaphysics of will and the possibility of the denial of the will, is a clear example of such a carefully-constructed text. The text begins on comfortable ground in Book 1, which gives a Kantian-style analysis of the necessary features of everyday experience. The reader is then led slowly towards more

unsettling claims, beginning with the identification of the thing in itself with will in Book 2, which retains Kantian language, yet makes remarkable claims that go beyond Kant, such as that the physical body is a manifestation of will. Things become even stranger in Book 3, where Platonic language is used to explicate an account of aesthetic experience that gives deep metaphysical significance to the possibility of engaging with works of art. Finally, in Book 4, Schopenhauer comes to the more unconventional, less familiar aspects of his philosophy, ending with the almost unintelligible, mystical doctrine of the denial of the will. Such an argumentative strategy could not have worked the other way around: that is, Schopenhauer could not have begun with an account of the denial of the will, as the vast majority of readers would have immediately put the book back on the shelf, dismissing the system presented there as speculative nonsense. By placing his examination of the denial of the will at the end of the book, preceded by accounts of less extreme versions of that phenomenon centred on the familiar philosophical topics of art and morality, Schopenhauer prepares the ground for his readers, such that they will be more likely to engage with the discussion presented, and attempt to achieve the same insights underlying the text for themselves.

To an extent, then, Schopenhauer withholds the truth from his readers, in the sense that the progression of the argument of *WWR* does not make the strange endpoint of his system clear until the reader is prepared for it. The truth is ‘managed,’ in that the conceptualisation of philosophical insights in the terminology of the metaphysics of will is carefully constructed: familiar terminology is used alongside unfamiliar ideas, some stemming from Indian philosophy, which readers in the West may not be comfortable with if expressed in their original terms. The text is also intended to leave some work for the reader, in that they will have to take an active approach towards retrieving for themselves the insights underlying the conceptual presentation of the philosophical system in question. The reader will be able to proceed at their own pace, and may have to read the text repeatedly in order to gain the inspiration required to discover philosophical insight themselves, and in fact Schopenhauer tells us to approach his texts in such a way.

To reinforce this interpretation of Schopenhauer’s metaphilosophy, it is useful at this point to review Schopenhauer’s comments regarding how we should read his texts. One particularly important passage in this regard falls in the ‘Preface to the first edition’ in *WWR1*, where he states that he wishes to specify how the book ought to be read. He tells us that the work “aims to convey a single thought . . . considered from different sides, [revealing] itself respectively as what has been called metaphysics, what has been called ethics, and what has been called aesthetics” (*WWR1*, vii). As we read *WWR1*, then, we will be introduced to a unified philosophical system based around a

single thought, which will only be fully illuminated until it has been considered from different sides, construed as the major areas of philosophy.

Schopenhauer writes that the organic nature of the system presented,<sup>11</sup> unified by a single thought, alongside “the extremely close connections between all of the parts” of the text, has required him “to leave it in four main parts, four perspectives, as it were, on the one thought” (WWR1, ix). Despite the perspectival nature of the text, we must endeavour to ensure that we always keep the unified nature of the text (and the system which it explicates) in mind as we read it: “The reader must be particularly careful not to lose sight of the principal thought in the associated details that need to be treated along with it, or of the progress of the presentation as a whole” (ibid.). Thus, the reader has quite a complex project on their hands, if they wish to fully grasp the significance of the text presented, in that they not only have to take in the details of each part of the text as it is presented to them, but they also need to bear in mind the unified nature of the system beyond whatever perspective is being taken at that moment.

Further explicating the structure of the text of *WWR1*, Schopenhauer states that the single thought which unifies the whole system will act as a “foundation stone [which] will ultimately support all the parts without itself being supported by any of them, and the summit will be supported without itself supporting anything,” with the effect that the system will have “an architectonic coherence, i.e., a coherence in which one part always supports another without the second supporting the first” (WWR1, vii-viii). However, the difficulty for Schopenhauer is how to communicate such an intertwined system, where the ‘foundation stone’ may not be immediately obvious as we have to progressively illuminate different sides of it before we can attempt to properly comprehend it. In this regard, the linear form of a book is problematic: “a book must have a first line and a last, and to this extent will always be different from an organism, however similar they might be in content: as a result, form and matter are in contradiction here” (WWR1, viii). The structure and matter of a book means that the architectonic system, organically unified by a single thought or original intuitive insight, needs to be artificially conceptualised and divided up. As Schopenhauer explains,

[if] it is divided up in order to be communicated, the various parts must still be organically coherent, i.e., each part containing the whole just as much as it is contained by the whole, with no part first and no part last, the whole thought rendered more distinct through each part, and even the smallest part incapable of being fully understood without a prior understanding of the whole (ibid.).

If Schopenhauer’s communication of his unified system is to be successful, each section of the work needs to reflect the single thought just as much as the

others and placed with the other sections such that they successively reveal the various aspects of the single thought, as it appears in different areas of philosophical reflection.

Further to this, Schopenhauer makes the crucial point that no part of the book will be fully comprehensible until one already has a sense of the text as a whole. On first reading, one will be able to engage with the material to some extent, but the deeper significance of what is presented will not be comprehensible until the reader understands the overall shape of the text, particularly where it is headed, that is, its developmental endpoint in the denial of the will. Once the salvific scheme underlying the metaphysics of will is grasped, in at least a limited sense, then the reader will be able to return to earlier parts of text with a new perspective upon the different aspects of the single thought presented.

The later parts of *WWRI* will thus have a deep metaphilosophical impact upon our understanding of the earlier parts of the text and the system as a whole. Take Book 1 of *WWRI*, for example: At first reading, it may appear as a pretty straightforward exercise in Kantian epistemology, whereas upon second reading, it gains a deeper significance as describing an illusory form of consciousness which brings great suffering to the individual, and thus as something that can and must be rejected. Given all this, Schopenhauer states that,

[it] is evident that the only way to completely fathom the thought presented here is to *read the book twice*, and in fact with considerable patience the first time, the sort of patience that only comes from a voluntary conviction that the beginning presupposes the end almost as much as the end presupposes the beginning, and similarly that all the earlier parts presuppose the later ones almost as much as the later ones presuppose the earlier. (ibid.)

While there is a sense in which the beginning had to be the beginning and the end had to be the end, in relation to presenting the system in the most comprehensible order,<sup>12</sup> nevertheless the beginning cannot be fully comprehended without some sense of the end, as the beginning ‘presupposes’ the end, to a certain extent. Thus, the reader must read the text at least twice, in order to ensure that all parts of the text are fully understood and that the reader can thereby grasp the single thought presented in all of its aspects.

A sense of the whole of the system, including its developmental endpoint in the negation of the will, will allow us to see the text “in a very different light” (*WWRI*, ix) when we return to a second reading. Thus, we can see, in Schopenhauer’s pronouncements concerning how we should approach *WWRI* as a reader, the kind of considerations that inform his metaphilosophy, with a

particular focus upon how a limited readership can be best prepared to take on the difficult, mysterious insights embodied in the metaphysics of will.

In addition to Schopenhauer's careful management of the presentation of his system, Snow points to the adoption of the 'authorial I,' which makes Schopenhauer a more immediate presence in his writings: "Schopenhauer is always present to the reader. The 'I' that speaks is invariably Schopenhauer himself. Not only does Schopenhauer make use of the first-person reflexive pronoun more frequently than do his contemporaries, but the reader rarely encounters a single page of text where Schopenhauer is not clearly present" (1993, 405). The constant use of 'I' makes the writing feel more personal, so that it seems directly aimed at each individual reader alone. It also gives the text a more conversational, almost conspiratorial tone, in which we are being granted a glimpse into a controversial, but nevertheless revelatory, metaphysical system. Adding to this personal touch, with regard to his various discussions of other philosophers, Schopenhauer adopts almost a tone of gossiping: as an example, "The fable of Pandora has never been clear to me, indeed, it has always struck me as absurd and perverse. I suspect that it was already misunderstood and twisted by Hesiod himself" (PP2, 438). In addition, Snow notes Schopenhauer's transition between being terse and loquacious, striking a confident tone and a more cautious one, depending upon the context, as well as the use of allusion, simile and metaphor (see Snow 1993, 406).

Through constructing the presentation of his system in such a way, Schopenhauer believes that he will have a greater chance of inspiring both the theoretical and practical change that he wishes to see in the gifted few who are able to engage in genuine metaphysical reflection. The careful exposition of the system in his philosophical works uses all kinds of rhetorical tricks, as well as his conceptualisation of philosophical insight into the metaphysics of will, in order to ensure that he can have the greatest impact upon the reader as possible.

Snow (1993), however, wishes to go beyond a simple description of Schopenhauer's writing style, as we have offered here, by attempting to designate *WWR* as a particular kind of text, namely, as a meditation, along the lines of Descartes' *Meditations*. In defence of this view, he particularly emphasises Schopenhauer's use of the subjective standpoint: "Schopenhauer writes a meditation. In fact, given his radically reflexive methodological posture, he could not help but write a meditation. Like the Descartes of the *Meditations*, Schopenhauer appeals to a kind of experience, which, like our experience of ourselves as thinking things, is relentlessly and essentially first-personal" (Snow 1993, 408). The difficulty I have with this view is that Schopenhauer's texts are so multi-faceted, with a variety of standpoints and rhetorical devices adopted, it may be misleading to treat them as being one



kind of text in particular. It may be interesting to read some passages from Schopenhauer as drawing upon the meditative tradition in philosophy, but it will certainly be a stretch to conclude that this is the primary characterisation that we can grant to the kind of text that he writes.

As an undeniably accomplished communicator, Schopenhauer draws upon a number of literary styles and devices, in order to maximise the impact of his texts upon the reader. While there may be aspects of the meditative tradition that Schopenhauer uses, there are some which do not feature in his works, such as, for example, a clear time-frame for reflection, which can be found in both Ignatius and Descartes. Therefore, it is best to recognise Schopenhauer as reflecting a number of literary styles in his work, without giving them a primary characterisation as a ‘meditation’ or anything else.

In addition, we can view Schopenhauer’s stylistic approach as revealing his deep kinship with ancient philosophical sources, both ancient Greek and Indian. As Melzer argues, more ancient philosophical sources recognised the difficulties facing those who wish to gain philosophical insights and used a variety of literary resources to move away from a purely literal approach:

[they] endorsed and explored the profound intuition—found everywhere outside the modern West—that the whole enterprise of using books for the transmission of philosophic wisdom is an extraordinarily difficult (and possibly futile) undertaking that, when pursued, requires rhetorical techniques extending well beyond the contemporary ethic of literalness and clarity. (2014, 208)

It was only with the dawn of early modern thinkers, such as Bacon and Hobbes, that, philosophical discourse “gave new and fundamental importance to certainty and exactness,” leading to “the adoption of artificially designed ways of thinking and speaking” (2014, 209). Further, such early modern thinkers were generally mistrustful of the use of the rhetorical devices of the past, believing that they were ultimately being used to foster illusion and superstition. Schopenhauer stylistically breaks with these thinkers, believing that the use of rhetoric is necessary to promote philosophical engagement and the fostering of genuine metaphysical insight. In his stylistic approach, then, he shows his links with ancient Greek and Indian philosophy, at the expense of any influence from his Enlightenment forebears.

Of course, I would not wish to claim that Schopenhauer has entirely left the essence of the Enlightenment behind: For one thing, his approach draws upon Kant and the British Empiricist tradition too much for that to be the case. Schopenhauer certainly does not revel in the inevitable obscurity of his works, and he is keen to not overuse rhetorical devices, in that he certainly does not wish to foster superstition and illusion amongst his readers; rather,

he is simply doing all he can to mitigate the limits of conceptualisation, language and communication that we have explored in this work.

## RATIONALISM AND ILLUMINISM

At the background of much scholarship on Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy is a puzzle arising from the sense amongst many readers that his philosophy strays into speculation at various points. This aspect of his work is rather controversial, with some scholars claiming that he has broken his own epistemic limits by claiming, for example, that the thing in itself is will, and others stating that the apparently speculative elements of his philosophy are not in fact speculative. I will therefore close the chapter by considering this important topic of the extent to which Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy allows for a kind of conjecture that may appear overly speculative or mystical. I argue that Schopenhauer's philosophy does stray into speculation, albeit in a limited sense, and in a way that is ultimately grounded consistently in the underlying metaphilosophy that we have been examining. The self-consciously speculative nature of Schopenhauer's work can be most clearly seen in his discussion of the distinction between rationalism and illuminism, which will be the focus of this section.

Schopenhauer addresses the speculative nature of his views, particularly concerning his account of the denial of the will, in a letter to David Asher from 1859. He starts with a rejection of the claim that his philosophy marks a "turn away from higher speculation and [a] move more or less towards faith" (DA, 15). Though it might seem surprising that Schopenhauer is happy to be characterised as engaged in 'higher speculation,' what he wishes to emphasise is that his thought is very much within the realms of philosophy and not religion. Thus, we should not read 'speculation' here in a pejorative sense, as he is happy to attribute to the Absolute Idealists, but in a more anodyne sense of simply trying to discern some metaphysical truths. Indeed, in the same passage, after allowing that he engages in 'higher speculation,' he is keen to nevertheless affirm his Kantian credentials: "I, true to Kantian principles, do not speak about that of which neither I nor anyone else can know anything" (ibid.). So, Schopenhauer is happy to state that he engages in philosophical speculation, though with the provisos that faith does not come into his reflections and that he stays true to Kantian epistemic limits.

However, Schopenhauer then asks himself, "what are my articles of faith?" to which he answers, "[perhaps] that the nothingness which is finally what is left is not absolute but only relative?" (ibid.). Thus, it is here with the relative nothingness of the denial of the will that Schopenhauer admits that he may have left Kantian epistemic limits behind, and that he may indeed be

engaging in speculation in a stronger sense.<sup>13</sup> To understand the status of the denial of the will within Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy in more detail, we can consider a number of passages where he openly reflects upon its inclusion in his philosophy, as well as the speculative nature of his system as a whole.

Julian Young, for example, argues for a very restrictive reading of Schopenhauer's claims regarding the cognitive limits of philosophy. He correctly points to the general theme of epistemic caution surrounding the metaphysical enterprise for Schopenhauer, who speaks of the "ultimately 'negative' . . . character of philosophy, [and] its inability, the inability of human reason in general, to know, or even *conceive*, the character of ultimate reality" (1987, 33). Thus, if one wishes to resist Young's claim that Schopenhauer abandons any attempt at mystical or speculative cognition, we will have to find an interpretation that nevertheless accounts for the 'negative' character that he attributes to philosophy.

Young points to the significance of Schopenhauer's discussion of 'illumination' in this regard, to which we turn now. At various points in his later works, Schopenhauer distinguishes between rationalism and illumination, which he glosses as "the use [respectively] of the objective and the subjective source of cognition," with the philosophical tradition moving from one to the other and back again, like "a pendulum swinging back and forth" (PP2, 9). His attitude towards these two strands of thought in the history of philosophy are revealing with regard to his views concerning the speculative nature of his own philosophy, insofar as he ultimately sides with rationalism, but with an interesting caveat.

Rationalism, "whose organ is intellect originally specified only for the service of the *will* and therefore directed *outwards*" (ibid.), has its first appearance in philosophy as dogmatism, which evolves into scepticism when it inevitably runs into difficulties.<sup>14</sup> The ongoing dispute between dogmatism and scepticism can only be resolved, Schopenhauer states, "through consideration of the *subject*, [by which] it becomes *transcendental philosophy* . . . [that is] any philosophy whose starting point is that its closest and immediate object is not things, but only human *consciousness* of things, which therefore must never be disregarded or left out of account" (PP2, 9–10). Here, Schopenhauer affirms his ongoing allegiance to Kant's transcendental project, by identifying the Critical philosophy as a form of rationalism and affirming that his philosophy is rationalist in its approach. It further captures the manner in which consideration of outer experience, for Schopenhauer, leads ultimately to a turn inwards in considering the nature of consciousness itself.

At this point, Schopenhauer states, "rationalism arrives at the insight that its organ comprehends only *appearance*, but does not reach the ultimate, inner and intrinsic essence of things" (PP2, 10), and so it comes to its culmination in the realisation of the distinction between appearance and thing in

itself. Schopenhauer credits Descartes with the beginning of the impulse of rationalism to distinguish between the objective and subjectively-grounded aspects of our cognition (see PP1, 3), a distinction which evolved and was refined by philosophers until its completion in the appearance/thing in itself distinction.

Illuminism, on the other hand, begins as an inwardly focused enterprise, taking as its organ, “inner illumination, intellectual intuition, higher consciousness, immediately cognitive reason, divine consciousness,” in other words, a kind of “*inner* perception” (ibid.). The problem of trying to use inner perception to achieve insight is that it inevitably falls into mysticism, because, for one thing, anything cognizable by these means cannot be straightforwardly communicated. As language “[arose] for the purpose of the intellect’s *outwardly* directed cognition, by means of its own abstractions” (ibid.), it is simply unable to capture any insight from inner perception, leaving us unable to fully communicate any potential insights from intuition. Given this, the inner cognition involved in illuminism is “indemonstrable, whereupon, hand in hand with scepticism, rationalism once again enters the field” (ibid.).<sup>15</sup> If insights from illuminism are confined to one individual alone, and simply cannot be captured by language, then rationalism will inevitably have the upper hand in the philosophical tradition. Rationalism and our language share a source in outer cognition, and thus at least some form of rationalist philosophical discourse can take place amongst individuals.

Schopenhauer regards himself as standing within the rationalist tradition, on the basis that “philosophy should be *communicable* cognition, and must therefore be rationalism” (PP2, 11). However, Schopenhauer’s stance is not altogether clear-cut, as he then immediately concedes that there is an element of illuminism in his philosophy:

[at] the end of my philosophy I have, to be sure, alluded to the field of illuminism as something that exists, but I guarded against taking even a single step into it; nor have I undertaken to provide ultimate conclusions about the existence of the world, but instead have gone only so far as is possible using objective, rationalist means. I have allowed illuminism to have its free space, where in its own way it might arrive at the solution to all riddles, without at the same time allowing it to block my path or giving it reason to polemicize against me. (ibid.)

Interpreting the ‘end’ of his philosophy as the postulated state of relative nothingness following the denial of the will, Schopenhauer again is marking out this claim as a part of his philosophy unlike any other. Indeed, it seems that Schopenhauer is not necessarily shifting his stance in a fundamental way, from rationalism to illuminism, in speaking of the denial of the will but at the very least coming up to the border between rationalism and illuminism.

One could say that he is flirting with the kind of speculation that illuminism indulges in by trying to communicate a potential insight which is almost entirely incommunicable.

How can Schopenhauer, though, ‘allude to’ illuminism in his discussion of relative nothingness, without stepping into it? Clearly, at the same time as allowing some speculative aspect to his account, he wishes to stress that he has not allowed himself to indulge in nonsense, by denying that he is providing ‘ultimate conclusions about the existence of the world.’ Having stayed firmly within the realm of rationalism, he can state that he has stayed out of the way of illuminism. In principle, pure illuminists could achieve the philosophical insight that he has achieved, though they could only do so by different means than those used by him.

Schopenhauer makes his stance with regard to rationalism and illuminism, such that he can allude to the latter without stepping into it, a little clearer in the following paragraph:

[it] may often be the case that a *hidden illuminism* lies at the basis of rationalism, at which then the philosopher looks as if at a hidden compass while purportedly making his way only by the stars, i.e., by external and clearly delineated objects, taking only these into consideration. This is admissible because he does not undertake to communicate incommunicable cognition, but instead his communication remains objective and rational. This may have been the case with Plato, Spinoza, Malebranche and many others; it should not concern anyone, for these are the *secrets of the heart*. (ibid.—my emphasis)

Schopenhauer is reiterating here that there is an element of illuminism in his philosophy, as he admitted in relation to his account of relative nothingness.<sup>16</sup> However, this quotation seems to reveal that a ‘hidden illuminism’ might have an even larger role to play in his philosophy than he has admitted so far. Though a philosopher may, on the surface, be focusing in their philosophy on the ‘external and delineated objects’ of rationalism, nevertheless they may be guided in their thoughts by an inner perception, which acts as a ‘hidden compass’ that shows the way towards genuine philosophical insight.

Schopenhauer’s use of imagery concerning compasses is of particular interest here. He writes, for example, of true philosophy as a “magnet that always and everywhere points to an absolutely determined point in the world” (PP2, 15). The imagery of a compass is also used in his early notes in relation to ‘better consciousness’: he states that we can “maintain the better consciousness when not always present, indeed to preserve its pronouncements and make it the compass which navigates the ship of life even in the dark” (MR1, 48). Thus, even early on in his philosophical reflections, Schopenhauer allows for an illuminist guide underlying our philosophical reflections (in

this case, with regard to any cognition we may have in relation to the better consciousness). Elsewhere, Schopenhauer also speaks of a commitment to pessimism as offering a secure guide for our metaphysical reflections and giving a more productive shape to our attitude towards life: “In order to have a sure compass always in hand for finding our bearings in life, and in order to view life always in the proper light without ever going astray, nothing is more useful than to accustom oneself to regarding this world as a place of penance, hence as a prison, a penal colony as it were, a labour camp” (PP2, 321). The inner compass that points us towards better consciousness or denial of the will therefore also brings with it a realisation of the parlous state of the world, which as we saw forms an important part of the drive to philosophy in the need for metaphysics.<sup>17</sup>

So, if this is what Schopenhauer is doing, then is his philosophy *really* rationalism, or is he in fact falling into illuminism, in the pejorative sense of high-flown, incommunicable speculation? Schopenhauer argues that it is his stance towards the communication of philosophy that stops him from indulging in unacceptable illuminism, in that he does not attempt to communicate the incommunicable. The picture that he is painting of the relation between illuminism and rationalism in his philosophy is therefore rather complex. At the point where he is constructing his system, with a view to attempting to communicate his philosophy, Schopenhauer stands within the rationalist tradition, expressing his insights from an externally orientated intellectual standpoint that will be recognisable to the philosophical reader who is familiar with the tradition, in particular that reader who understands the transcendental framework formulated by Kant.

However, throughout this process, Schopenhauer is constantly referring what he expresses on the abstract, communicable level to a kind of inner perception or intuitive insight that he has gained in virtue of his genius, to check that he has not gone too far astray from the truth. He is able to achieve this through his work despite the imperfect way in which intuition translates into abstract concepts. At the same time, he is checking his claims in relation to evidence from the point of view of rationalism too (in particular, what we can learn from the examination of consciousness, in the manner of Kantian philosophy), in the same way that he uses both the subjective and objective viewpoint in order to confirm metaphysical truths. It is this complex picture of constructing a philosophical system in concepts from an intuitive basis that is what Schopenhauer is trying to capture in his carefully worded discussion regarding the mix of illuminism and rationalism in his philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

In particular, he is keen to emphasise that despite this illuminist element to his thought, he is nevertheless not engaging in the kind of speculation that he derides in others. As part of this, Schopenhauer wishes to maintain that his use of illuminism is unlike that of the Absolute Idealists: “Fichte’s and

Schelling's loud appeal to intellectual intuition and the impudent narration of its content, along with the claim for its objective validity, are shameless and reprehensible" (ibid.). The difference, he states, between his illuminism and that of others is that he does not use this standpoint by itself:

*illuminism* in and of itself is a natural and thus justifiable attempt to establish the truth. For the *outwardly* directed intellect, as mere organon for the purpose of the *will* and consequently merely secondary, is indeed only a *part* of our total human nature . . . What then can be more natural, when the objective cognizing intellect fails, than to seek help by putting into play one's entire remaining essence, which must also be the thing in itself, i.e., must belong to the true essence of the world and consequently harbour somehow the solution to all riddles? (PP2, 11–12)

Unlike other philosophers who use illuminism, Schopenhauer does not employ it on its own; rather, he uses it in the kind of interplay with rationalism that I described above. He understands the temptation, given the problems arising from rationalism (usually in the form of scepticism), to abandon the externally-directed intellect as the organ of philosophical reflection and instead rely upon illuminism alone.

The temptations of illuminism become even greater when we reflect upon the fact that we have immediate cognition of ourselves "immediately, and of everything else only mediately," that the "immense external world has its existence only in the *consciousness* of cognizing beings," and that "when we go deep inside ourselves [we can] bring to consciousness that feeling of originality that lies in every knowing being," such that we recognize in ourselves "the true centre of the world, indeed, the primal source of all reality" (PP2, 17–18). When we compare the nature and content of our cognition of the external world with that of consciousness of ourselves, or, as Schopenhauer puts it, "inwardly directed attention" (PP2: 18), the latter naturally comes across as more impressive in offering direct, deep insight into the fundamental nature of things.

However, despite all this, the use of illuminism alone to achieve metaphysical truths is ultimately unjustified, for we can achieve solid metaphysical results through consideration of our own body and the world around us. Without some consideration of the more determinate objects of our outer perception acting as an anchor that keeps us firmly weighted to the aspect of reality revealed in appearance, we can too easily fall into high-flown speculation, with the nonsensical results of the Absolute Idealists as an ultimate consequence. As long as we take into account the "objective, intuitive apprehension of things," our philosophy cannot be "completely false, but instead is at worst only one-sided" (PP2, 13). Thus, illuminism and rationalism interact in a

reciprocally supportive relationship when used properly. Schopenhauer's philosophy attempts that balancing act which will ensure these two approaches can interact in a fruitful way such that any potential metaphysical results are as well-supported as possible.

While illuminism can act as a 'hidden compass' for rationalism, ensuring that our philosophy remains in contact with genuine, intuitive philosophical insight, rationalism, at the same time, stops illuminism from falling into nonsensical speculation. As far as Schopenhauer sees it, "the only proper and objectively valid way to execute something like this is to apprehend the empirical fact of the will that manifests itself inside us, indeed constitutes our sole essence, and to apply it to the explanation of objective external cognition . . . [The] path of illuminism [alone] does not lead to the goal" (PP2, 12). Thus, though you may begin with philosophical considerations from inner perception of the kind that characterises an illuminist approach, you cannot justifiably stay there; rather, you have to ensure that these reflections are then applied to your external cognition, for the reasons given above. As such cognition does potentially yield metaphysical truths, there is no justification for ignoring it in your philosophical reflections. In parallel with Schopenhauer's understanding of interactions between the subjective and objective standpoints, we therefore see a similar collaborative and fruitful relation between rationalism and illuminism in the metaphysics of will.<sup>19</sup>

Schopenhauer's surprisingly positive appraisal of illuminism is recognized by Young, who states that, "Schopenhauer is not unsympathetic to the idea that there is experiential access to ultimate reality: a 'sphere of illuminism' is accepted . . . the veridicality of mystical insight into another, ecstatic, world" (1987, 34). However, Young goes on to claim that Schopenhauer wishes to avoid illuminism in his philosophy entirely: "[what] Schopenhauer says about illuminism in *Parerga*, is not that it is a fairy-story invented by charlatans and humbugs, but rather that the deliverances of supersensible intuition are mystical" (ibid.), are not communicable, and so cannot be part of philosophy. As such, as Young's argument goes, Schopenhauer's objection to the Absolute idealists turns out to be "not that they have fabricated a faculty, but rather that they have no business bringing it into philosophy" (ibid.).

The interpretation presented here shows how Schopenhauer can legitimately bring illuminism into his metaphysics, while maintaining philosophy as a field of study that can be communicated to others as an ultimately rationalist enterprise. Schopenhauer is attempting to tread a thin line in remaining with Kantian epistemic bounds, while claiming that we can have legitimate cognition that touches upon that which is beyond the world of experience, and this is further reflected in his nuanced conception of the interplay between illuminism and rationalism in his philosophy.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have now completed our discussion of various connected topics central to our understanding of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, including the intended practical impact of the presentation of the metaphysics of the will upon the reader, the potential incorporation of aspects of mysticism or speculation in the metaphysics of will, and the manner in which we should approach Schopenhauer's texts. I have argued that Schopenhauer sees his philosophy as involving an interplay of rationalism and illuminism, with the latter acting as a 'hidden compass,' implicitly guiding his philosophical reflections, and ensuring that he does not stray too far from the data of his experience. He seeks to find an epistemological 'middle-way' between high-flown speculation and a purely immanent philosophy that is constrained to what is directly available to us in experience alone. Also, we can see Schopenhauer as giving careful consideration to how he structures the text and uses a variety of rhetorical devices, in order to ensure that his audience are able to garner the insights and practical benefits that are potentially accessible through the metaphysics of will.

Such metaphilosophical considerations certainly raise more questions regarding the status of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, and specific claims he makes, such as the status of the Ideas as grades of the manifestation of the will and his identification of the thing in-itself with will. For now, we can certainly take away the lesson that his metaphilosophy is remarkably complex and can be a highly fruitful perspective for research into his work. Reflecting more widely, it may even lead to reconsider Schopenhauer's place in the philosophical tradition, as I will reiterate in the concluding section that follows.

## NOTES

1. An earlier version of some of the material in this chapter can be found in my paper, 'Speculation and Esotericism in Schopenhauer's Philosophy' (2019) *Il Pensare* 9. I am grateful to the editor of that journal for permission to reuse that material here.

2. Casucci has traced the development of the relation between Idea and concept in Schopenhauer's early notes, up to the account given in *WWR*: he argues that, though at points in the early notes, "Idea and concept move progressively closer to each other, up to the point where it is difficult to distinguish between them" (2017, 130), nevertheless, by the time we reach *WWR*, the framework set by the metaphysics of will ensures their distinct separation.

3. Vasalou denies that she is collapsing philosophy into art, in particular into the "poetic paradigm" (2013, 66n33) that she believes lies particularly close to philosophical method. However, even with this proviso, I argue that her interpretation

expresses a desire to align Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy too closely to his account of aesthetic engagement, beyond that merited by the text, as undeniably interesting as this interpretation is.

4. A comprehensive account of Schopenhauer's tour of Europe is offered by Cartwright (see 2010, ch. 2).

5. As Cartwright notes, Becker "[the] philosophically skilled lawyer made [Schopenhauer] admit that some of his doctrines were meant to be taken figuratively and not literally" (2010, 510).

6. Young (2005, 176–77) rightly argues that malice, for Schopenhauer, is a form of disguised egoism, grounded in the desire to cause suffering in others to alleviate our own suffering (see FR, 200).

7. The desire for one's own woe is only identified as a possible type of motivation in a footnote in *WWR2* (*WWR2*, 695n.).

8. Soskice (see 1985, 31–51) has explored the manner in which incremental metaphors could function to extend our understanding.

9. Neeley makes the mistake of using the term 'noumenal' in relation to Schopenhauer's reflections upon the thing in itself and will. As Atwell (1995, 108) points out, Schopenhauer does not use that term in the explication of his own system: it is instead reserved for descriptions and criticism of Kant's critical philosophy.

10. White also suggests the possibility of a metaphorical interpretation of Schopenhauer's key metaphysical claims in relation to the influence of Indian thought upon his philosophy (see 1992, 130), as well as with regard to the claim that the will can be determined by motives in accordance with the association of ideas (see 1992, 166), but, unlike Neeley (2003), he does not go into any more detail with regard to how Schopenhauer may have specifically understood his use of metaphor in the explication of his philosophy.

11. Wicks notes the connection between Schopenhauer's understanding of his system as having organic unity with its claimed source in an intuitive insight: "Schopenhauer conceives of philosophical activity as a more immediately visionary enterprise, where all of the vision's components present themselves as a single, integrated insight, like a ready-formed organism" (2011, 20). In a sense, the whole of the system is contained within the original insight, such that it has an inbuilt inferential structure, and it is this aspect of the original insight that Schopenhauer is trying to capture with the notion of 'organic unity.' As a result of this, as Wicks argues (see 2011, 19–22), Schopenhauer is keen to emphasise the distinction between his system and other kinds of metaphysical system, such as a Spinoza-style rationalism where axioms are laid down, followed by propositions which logically follow from them, and a Locke-style empiricism, which begin with a basic set of experiences as a foundation for all further thought.

12. Schopenhauer states that he has done all he can to put things in the right order, with a view to aiding the reader through his philosophy as it is explicated in the text: "anything that could be done to give priority to what is explained only in the sequel—just as in general whatever could facilitate comprehensibility and clarity—has been honestly and conscientiously done" (*WWR1*, viii).

13. Schopenhauer believes that he is still keeping to the ‘immediate surroundings’ that Kant’s epistemic limits confine us to, though he is coming right up to these limits such that no-one can legitimately go any further (see GB, 278).

14. Schopenhauer sees scepticism as both a useful and unavoidable aspect of philosophical thought. Philosophical systems will always face sceptical challenges because “philosophy is not capable of the same kind of evidentness found in mathematics,” but if any given philosophical system is developed to the point where it has at least some element of truth to it, “its weight will eventually become so minor relative to the [system in question] that it no longer harms it” (PP2, 12). Not only can scepticism be outweighed (if not overcome), it ultimately proves beneficial in promoting the kind of epistemic humility that will ultimately make any philosophy conceived in its spirit that much stronger: “That *which one knows* has double value if one at the same time does not purport to know what one *does not know*” (ibid.).

15. As a further difficulty for illuminism, Schopenhauer states that “for *inner* perception there is no criterion of identity of the object of different subjects” (PP2, 10). The point seems to be that even if insights from illuminism could potentially be put into language, two speakers in a philosophical dialogue could never be certain that they are speaking of the same thing and thus any such dialogue will inevitably be plagued with uncertainty and confusion.

16. Cross argues that Schopenhauer’s admittance of a ‘hidden compass’ as guiding his philosophical reflections, and thus ultimately giving some legitimate role to illuminism, is another aspect of his system which reveals the influence of Indian thought: “Outwardly he adopts, and with some rigour, the Western stance that philosophical investigation is the preserve of human reason, must work within its limits, and is quite distinct from ‘illuminism’ or mysticism,” but under the surface, “through cracks in his armour we see appearing the belief that the ‘inner illumination, intellectual intuition, higher consciousness’ known to the mystics might be the true guiding light of the philosopher, the hidden compass,” and of such a view of the relation between philosophy and mysticism, “[few] Indian thinkers, whether Buddhism or Hindu, would fail to agree with this” (2014, 211).

17. App (2014, 11–15) also writes of pessimism and the negation of the will as the ‘two poles’ of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, established early as an ongoing guide for the construction and explication of his system in his philosophical works.

18. Schopenhauer’s avowed incorporation of illuminism into his philosophy perhaps might not be that surprising given his often positive attitude towards mysticism: for example, at one point he praises Christian mystics for their “insight that the validity of all such kinds of knowledge is merely relative and conditioned” (PP2, 37), while rationalists place too much faith in the power of intellect.

19. One of the reasons, perhaps, for why Schopenhauer feels that he can incorporate an aspect of illuminism into his philosophy, even though it is strictly a form of rationalism, is the fact that rationalism ends up, in its culmination in transcendental philosophy, as directed inward in a similar manner to the focus of illuminism on inner perception of some form. While Schopenhauer considers objects in nature from the objective standpoint in order to offer corroboration for his philosophy, he nevertheless focuses, in the major exposition of his philosophy as found in *WWR*, on the subjective

standpoint. The culmination of rationalism in Kant is supposed to lie in the subjective standpoint insofar as he responds to dogmatism and sceptical challenges by focusing upon the constitution of consciousness itself. Thus, it may be the case that the example of Kant demonstrated to Schopenhauer the manner in which rationalism and illuminism could be used in a collaborative way.



# Conclusion

In one of his earliest extant notes, we find Schopenhauer talking of the often-difficult journey that philosophy can take us on, from everyday things to a higher perspective:

Philosophy is a high mountain road which is reached only by a steep path covered with sharp stones and prickly thorns. It is an isolated road and becomes ever more desolate, the higher we ascend. Whoever pursues this path must show no fear, but must leave everything behind and confidently make his own way in the wintry snow. Often he suddenly comes to a precipice and looks down upon the verdant valley. A violent attack of dizziness draws him over the edge, but he must control himself and cling to the rocks with might and main. In return for this, he soon sees the world beneath him; its sandy deserts and morasses vanish from his view, its uneven spots are levelled out, its jarring sounds no longer reach his ear, and its roundness is revealed to him. He himself is always in the pure cool mountain air and now beholds the sun when all below is still engulfed in the dead of night. (MR1, 14)

This quite remarkable passage, likely from 1811, two years before he wrote his doctoral dissertation, is quite revealing about the conception of philosophy that Schopenhauer would operate with for the rest of his philosophical life. First of all, we are reminded of the very individualised notion Schopenhauer has of the philosophical traveller: we simply have one individual who is able and motivated to take that path and achieve this higher perspective, but must ultimately do it alone. Another important aspect of this imagined journey is that the philosopher is not, as you might expect, going up the mountain to look up at the stars; rather, they are looking down on the world around them. It is still the world of their experience they are examining. They are not seeking to discover a new transcendent realm, but from

their new philosophical perspective, they are able to see the world we know in a new light. Nevertheless, the very fact that a higher standpoint can even be attained upon the world is revealing in itself: The very possibility of this feat, and what we discover from our new perspective upon the world, may seem itself to suggest something of that which makes up the essence of the world and of ourselves.

The main aim of this work has been to offer an account of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, though undoubtedly there is much more work to be done on this topic: Areas which I have covered could be explored in more detail, and there may be other aspects yet to be investigated. However, to summarise what we have covered, we can state that, for Schopenhauer, philosophical reflection potentially begins early in adolescence, when the novelty of childhood gives way to the disappointment of the pessimistic truths regarding the nature of the world. A deep sense of the wrongness of the world naturally leads to a search for explanation and consolation, and a chosen few are able, due to their heightened intellectual capabilities, to achieve genuine insights into the essence of the world and conceptualise these insights into a system of metaphysics, though with an inevitable loss in the translation from intuition to reason.

Such individuals will inevitably wish to communicate their systems to others, through oral communication or writing. However, the limits of language and communication, in relation to intuitive insight, has the consequence that such teaching will have a limited impact on its own: the philosophical student is thus required to retrieve such insights for themselves, which the text itself can only point towards. Through the communication of the metaphysics of will, Schopenhauer hopes that he will not only aid us to a greater understanding of the nature and essence of the world, but also reveal the various methods of escape (some more permanent than others) from it.

As part of the preparation for such realisations, Schopenhauer's system has a developmental structure, where we are gradually led from the more familiar ground of Kantian epistemology, to the mystical end-point of the denial of the will. In order to fully explicate his system, Schopenhauer also seeks to make use of both the subjective and objective standpoints in collaboration in order to ensure that he provides us with the widest perspective possible upon the facts of our experience, both inner and outer. From the perspective of his metaphilosophy, we can see Schopenhauer as drawing upon numerous philosophical traditions (for example, Indian, Platonic, Cartesian, empiricist, and Kantian), with the result that he offers us a remarkable system that draws upon the past in a unique way.

Schopenhauer has a fascinating story to tell about human beings, not in the least regarding why they begin to philosophise and seek answers regarding the nature of existence and the world they find around them. His story

explores our desire to understand this strange and unsettling world we find ourselves in, as well as to find a potential avenue of escape from it (though the more permanent salvation offered in the form of the denial or negation of the will is only open to a tiny number of individuals). The persuasiveness of Schopenhauer on these points will revolve around the nature of your reflections on life and the world. Certainly, most human beings seemingly want answers regarding the world and what potentially lies beyond it, but the claim that this desire is grounded in a sense of the fundamental *wrongness* of the world might be questionable. We could potentially drop this pessimistic element of Schopenhauer's philosophy, and simply take away his unifying narrative regarding philosophy, religion and science as natural responses to an innate need for explanation (though not of the metaphysical kind, with regard to the latter). I would be inclined to say that this is a little quick, insofar as the falsity (or not) of pessimism is not as obvious as many people seem to think. After all, self-deception is very powerful. However, in line with Schopenhauer's reflections upon the difficulty of giving up deeply ingrained ideas, I suspect that those who are optimists will remain so, regardless of anything I or Schopenhauer might say. At the very least, I hope that the reader will take time to reflect upon Schopenhauer's ideas, to see if there is anything of value there for them. They might find they are rather surprised.

Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy also poses a challenge to today's philosopher, leading from his use of the interplay of the objective and subjective standpoints in his philosophy. As we have seen, he drew upon deep reflection upon both our interior lives and aspects of the world around us, including up-to-date scientific and anthropological findings, in order to construct a system that offered a persuasive picture of the world as a whole. He was not drawn into a cul-de-sac of specialisation but was instead keen to take as broad a perspective upon things as possible. How possible such a broad view is today, with all fields of inquiry becoming progressively more complex, is certainly a valid question, yet there is surely something to be said for Schopenhauer's view that philosophy should strive to be broad and deep in its scope.

It should be said that Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy has its failings, particularly in relation to the social side of modern thought, in that he is much more concerned with the reformation of the individual than society (indeed, Schopenhauer has little in the way of political theory to speak of, other than his views regarding the role of religion in society, which is still rather sketchy). However, an individual focus may have its benefits: after all, there is a sense in which everyone is alone, even if they live amongst others, and philosophy may be required to say something to people who are living in an increasingly isolated society.



A further impact of an increased understanding of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy is that it may lead us to reconceptualise his place in the history of philosophy. We have always known that Schopenhauer departs from Kant in major ways, but I think his metaphilosophy underlines the fundamental nature of the differences between them. Schopenhauer treats Kant like he treats any of his other influences, taking on the parts of Kantian thought that suit his purposes (which were largely set from the very earliest years of his philosophical career) and happily leaving behind the rest. He takes on transcendental idealism (albeit in a rather simplified form) because it suits his underlying metaphilosophical aims, including a desire to limit the speculative aspirations of the Absolute idealists, as well as wishing to use idealism as a framework within which he can make sense of a foundational change in consciousness and the possibility of an escape from the world as it appears to us.

Rather than being confined to the Kantian terms of reference of his time, we have seen that Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy shows that his philosophy has deep roots in the Ancient Greek and Indian philosophical traditions. The manner in which his philosophy touches upon the unknowable, the way he conceives the philosopher as undertaking the almost impossible task of communicating that which is on the cusp of incommunicable, and the focus upon the potential practical benefits of a deep change in the individual that results in a new way of life: all of these show Schopenhauer's philosophy as having a unique place in early nineteenth century philosophy, harking back to ancient times, and maybe looking forward to a new, unified philosophy, which brings theory and praxis together again in the spirit of therapy and a different way of life.

In addition to there being undoubtedly much more to be said on the topic of Schopenhauer's metaphilosophy, we are also yet to explore in more detail how his metaphilosophy should impact upon our interpretation and understanding of his wider philosophical system. How does his metaphilosophy precisely shape his key metaphysical claims, such as the identification of the thing in itself with will, and the Ideas as grades of the will's manifestation in the world as representation? How should we approach Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion in the light of his metaphilosophy? To what extent should we read Schopenhauer's claims as shaped so as to have a desired therapeutic impact? These are questions that we would do well to consider further. At the very least, I hope the reader will agree with me that is still much exciting work on Schopenhauer to be done.

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