

# Schopenhauer

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Winter, 2011 / Philosophy 151

## **Kant's Achievements**

- Schopenhauer held that Kant's work contains three great achievements.
  - The overthrow of the “scholastic” philosophy beginning with Augustine and continuing up to Kant.
  - The distinction between “phenomena” (what Kant called “appearances”) and things in themselves.
  - The claim that moral significance is independent of phenomena and is “something directly touching the thing-in-itself” (WWR, Appendix).
- These great achievements were accompanied by great errors.
- As a result, philosophers have been unable to appreciate the real significance of Kant's achievements, and in fact have perverted them.

## **The Overthrow of Scholastic Philosophy**

- Scholastic philosophy, for Schopenhauer, is devoted to proving the principal doctrines of the prevailing religion.
- Even the philosophy of Descartes and his successors is scholastic in this sense (with the exception of Spinoza and Bruno).
- Kant showed that the dogmas of speculative theology and rational psychology could not be proved.
- These alleged sciences have been abandoned in German philosophy.
- Natural science has, to its benefit, been liberated from them.

## **Phenomena and the Thing-in-Itself**

- The distinction between phenomena and the thing-in-itself was Kant's greatest achievement and as the fundamental characteristic of his philosophy.
- Things are not known as they are in themselves because they are known only as they are represented by the intellect, as phenomena.

- The phenomena, being representations, are *ideal*.
- This doctrine overthrows *realism*, “the raising of the fleeting phenomenon to the real inner being of the world” (WWR, Appendix).
- The claim that phenomena are not the fundamental reality had been made, without proof, by Plato and the philosophers of India.

### **Moral Significance**

- In pre-Kantian realism, the phenomena are the underlying reality.
- Therefore, the laws of the phenomena are apply to the moral qualities of human beings.
  - Eudaemonistic ethics is concerned with the way in which happiness can be attained.
  - Ethics based on divine will is concerned with the consequences of pleasing or displeasing God.
- The notion of “perfection” is empty when applied to ethics: we ought to do that which makes us be what we ought to be.
- Kant viewed the moral principle of human action as being significant for things in themselves.

### **Schopenhauer on Morality**

- Schopenhauer agreed with Kant’s negative claim that morality cannot be eudaemonistic.
- But he claimed that Kant’s attempt to derive a moral law from pure reason turns out to be eudaemonistic after all.
- Morality can be understood through an understanding of what is opposed to morality.
  - The fundamental anti-moral incentive is egoism, the desire for only one’s own well-being.
- The only way that egoism can be overcome is through compassion for one’s fellows.
- Thus, the basis of morality is compassion.
- Compassion is ultimately the result of the fact that all human beings are phenomena of one thing-in-itself.

### **The Principle of Sufficient Reason**

- Kant had argued that causality is a concept which the understanding applies universally and necessarily to appearances.
- Schopenhauer rejected Kant's argument for it, claiming instead that we have an unshakeable certainty in its truth.
- He claimed that the "law of causality" is one of four specialized forms of the "principle of sufficient reason."
  - "[A]ll our representations stand to one another in a natural and regular connection that in form is determinable A PRIORI" (*The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, Section 16).
- The three other laws concern connections between:
  - The "ground" of knowledge and what is known.
  - The parts of space and time.
  - The motivation for an action and the action.

### **Kant's Primary Error in Metaphysics**

- Kant assumed, as did traditional metaphysics, that metaphysical judgments are *a priori*.
- Kant correctly showed that if metaphysical judgments are *a priori*, there can be no knowledge of reality independent of the intellect.
- But it also follows from this assumption that metaphysical knowledge cannot rely on experience.
- This excludes the most important source of our knowledge of the world, which is our inner and outer experience.
- The way to recapture this source is to deny the assumption that metaphysics is a purely *a priori* science.

### **The Faulty Deduction of the Thing-in-Itself**

- Another major error in Kant's philosophy was the way in which he tried to prove the existence of things in themselves.
- The argument is as follows:
  1. Appearances are the result of empirical perception.
  2. Empirical perception depends on sensation.
  3. Sensation must have a cause.

4. The cause of sensation cannot be appearance.
  5. So, the cause of sensation is the thing-in-itself.
- The problem, pointed out by Schulze, is that causality is an *a priori* category that cannot apply to things in themselves.

### **Kant's Response to the Problem of the Thing-in-Itself**

- According to Schopenhauer, Kant reacted to the criticism of his deduction of things in themselves by radically revising the *Critique* in its second edition.
- He attempted to de-emphasize the subjective character of causality and appearances.
- He removed from the second edition the clear statements of idealism found in the first edition.
  - For example, “If I were to take away the thinking subject, the whole corporeal world would have to disappear, as this is nothing but the appearance in the sensibility of our subject and one more of its representations” (A383).
- Schopenhauer held that this revision made the work inconsistent, and he successfully lobbied for the re-publication of the first edition.

### **Fichte's Response to the Problem of the Thing-in-Itself**

- Fichte concluded that because the argument for the thing-in-itself is faulty, there is no thing-in-itself.
- Accordingly, he constructed a system in which not only the formal elements of representation, but also its material elements, are deduced *a priori* from the subject.
- This system is nonsense, exploiting the lack of judgment of the public and deflecting attention from Kant to Fichte himself.
- It depends on the claim that we have an intellectual intuition of the subject, which Schopenhauer describes as a “vaporing.”

### **Schopenhauer and Hegel**

- Schopenhauer extended his criticism of Fichte to Schelling and, especially, Hegel.
- He regarded Hegel as an intellectual fraud, who seduced his students into following him by numbing their minds with incomprehensible verbiage.

- “[T]he so-called philosophy of this fellow Hegel is a colossal piece of mystification which will yet provide posterity with an inexhaustible theme for laughter at our times, . . . it is a pseudo-philosophy paralyzing all mental powers, stifling all real thinking, and, by the most outrageous misuse of language, putting in its place the hollowest, most senseless, thoughtless, and, as is confirmed by its success, most stupefying verbiage.” (*On the Basis of Morality*, Preface to the First Edition)

### **Shopenhauer’s Response to the Problem**

- Rather than trying to make causality appear objective, Kant should have acknowledged its subjectivity.
- Given that sensation, space, and time are subjective as well, all the elements of appearances are subjective.
- So, nothing independent of the mind can be deemed necessary as a thing-in-itself.
- The thing-in-itself is properly discovered in through the experience of ourselves.
- There we discover *will*, as the thing-in-itself at the basis of ourselves as phenomena.
- This will as thing-in-itself is entirely different from appearances and their elements.

### **The Basic Argument for Idealism**

- The basic argument for idealism, “no object without a subject,” is attributed to Berkeley.
  1. All knowledge is a relation between *subject* and *object*.
  2. What knows is the subject and what is known is the object for that subject.
  3. If something is known, then it exists for knowledge.
  4. So, what exists for knowledge is the object for a subject.
  5. The whole of the knowable world exists for knowledge.
  6. What is object for a subject exists only as representation.
  7. So, the whole of the knowable world exists only as representation.
- The argument seems to be unsound.
- It is true that what is knowable “exists for knowledge” in that it exists in a way that allows it to be known, but it does not follow that it “exists for knowledge” in that the object’s very existence depends on being known.

### **Schopenhauer's Idealism**

- The basic argument for idealism purports to establish that the known world is my representation.
- Kant enhanced this argument by showing specifically how space, time, and causality are forms of representation.
- Material objects, then, are representations which are in space and time, and subject to causal laws.
- Following Kant, Schopenhauer held that the ideality of material objects is “transcendental” only, and not “empirical.”
- Only those representations which are subject to space, time and causality are empirically real and are not the inventions of the self.

### **The Will as Thing-in-Itself**

- An apparent problem for Schopenhauer is his claim to know that the thing-in-itself is will.
- The basic argument for idealism concludes that the whole knowable world is representation.
- The response is that a specific class of representations is encumbered by only one subjectively-contributed form.
  - Representations of ourselves are subject only to the form of time.
- In this way, representations of ourselves are nearly “transparent” and reveal enough of the underlying reality of ourselves that we can know what it is.
- What we discover in this self-representation is will.
- However, due to the form of time, we know will only through our acts, and we do not know the underlying character responsible for them.

### **Will and Intellect**

- All physical objects are “objectifications” for a subject of will, which is thing-in-itself.
- Thus, the organism that is the human body is an objectification of will.
- In this sense, the organism is “the primary phenomenon, that is, the immediate manifestation of the will.”
- A feature of the human organism is its complex brain and nervous system.

- The product of this brain is the intellect, which serves the ends of self-preservation of the body.
- Because the intellect depends on the organism, which is the primary phenomenon, the intellect is “the secondary phenomenon.”
- On this view, the intellect is physical, just as the organism is physical.
- Will, on the other hand, is metaphysical.

### ***The World as Will and Representation***

- Schopenhauer’s major work in philosophy was *The World as Will and Representation*.
  - It was originally published in 1818.
  - A second edition, containing fifty supplementary chapters, appeared in 1844.

The book is organized according to the following topics.

- First Book: The world as representation, subject to the principle of sufficient reason,
- Second Book: The world as will, objectified,
- Third Book: The world as representation, not subject to the principle of sufficient reason,
- Fourth Book: The world as will: self-knowledge and the will to live.

### **The Real Significance of Representation**

- The first set of selections, “The Will as Thing-in-Itself,” is taken from the Second Book.
- The Second Book begins in §17 with a summary of the First Book, which “considered the representation only as such, and hence only according to the general form.”
- In contrast, the Second Book considers the content of representation, “its more precise determinations, and the forms it presents to us.”
- The key topic will be the “real significance” of the representation which gives it meaning which it otherwise would not have.
- Viewed in this way, the images of representation “acquire an interest that engrosses our whole nature.”

### **Will as Revealing the Significance of Representation**

- The significance of representations could not be found by a purely knowing subject.
- It can only be discovered by an individual who is “rooted in the world” which he represents.
- This connection to the world exists because the individual has a body, which is more than merely a representation (as it would be for a purely knowing subject).
- The purely knowing subject could not explain the actions of his body except by laws of nature, such as govern all bodies.
- But a subject rooted in the world finds the basis of action in *will*.
- Will, and will alone, reveals the significance of his body and of the inner motivations which explain its behavior.

### **The Body as the Will Objectified**

- The body is given as will in a different way from the way it is given as a representation.
- Acts of will do not cause actions of the body.
- Rather, an action of the body is identical to an act of will.
  - “The action of the body is nothing but the act of will objectified, i.e., translated into perception.”
- Before the action of the body, there exists nothing more than resolve or intention to carry out the act.
- The intention exists only in reason.
  - “Every true, genuine, immediate act of the will is also at once and directly a manifest act of the body;
  - “and, correspondingly, on the other hand, every impression on the body is also at once and directly an impression in the will.”

### **Theoretical Egoism**

- Since one has immediate knowledge only of one’s own body, there are two ways of treating other bodies.
  - As being like one’s own, and the object of immediate knowledge of another subject,
  - As being unlike one’s own and not the object of the immediate knowledge of another subject.

- The latter view is “theoretical egoism,” according to which I am the only knowing subject in the universe.
- The goal of philosophy is to extend our knowledge beyond our limited subjective point of view, so it dismisses theoretical egoism.
- Although it cannot be refuted, theoretical egoism is a mad view that can be safely bypassed.
  - No theoretical egoist could criticize my arguments, since he would not acknowledge my existence!

### **There is Only Will and Representation**

- We find in our knowledge of our own body that we represent a world and that we will.
- This double knowledge is the key to the knowledge of the rest of the world.
- All other objects besides our bodies must be regarded as representation, as is our own body.
- And all other objects besides our own body must be regarded as will, just as is our own body.
- Since will and representation are all that is known or even conceivable to us, we must understand the rest of the world in these terms.
- So, if we are to understand other things as more than mere representations, we must understand them as will.

### **The Will as Thing-in-Itself**

- The most obvious attribution of will to other bodies is to men and animals that resemble and behave like my own body.
- However, will can be recognized in the behavior of other bodies.
  - Vegetative forces in plants,
  - Crystalization of minerals,
  - Magnetism,
  - Gravitation.
- The will which is known to myself immediately and attributed to objects in the world is not representation.
- It is thing-in-itself, of which all objects are only objectifications or phenomena.
- The only difference between the will’s appearance in our conscious deliberations and in the blind activity in the world is one of degree.

### **How to Describe the Thing-in-Itself**

- Will as manifest in my own action is just one of the many ways in which will becomes objectified.
- However, the word ‘will’ can be extended to the kernel or essence of all objects, though it does not operate the same way in them all.
- We should use this language because will is immediately known to us as thing-in-itself.
  - If we inferred the existence of the thing-in-itself, we could call it anything we like, as its character would be unknown.
- We must especially guard against calling the thing-in-itself ‘force,’ since that notion is taken entirely from phenomena.
- Rather than thinking of will as a species of force, we should regard force as a species of will.

### **The Principles of Individuation and Sufficient Reason**

- Time and space are only the forms of phenomena.
- They are also the principle of individuation, in that they allow us to distinguish things as being at different times and places.
- The will as thing-in-itself is not subject to the forms of phenomena, and hence it is not subject to the principle of individuation.
- Thus, will is a unitary being which is in neither time nor space.
- The will is not subject to the principle of sufficient reason, and hence is “groundless.”
- The groundlessness of the will is the basis of its freedom.
- But as phenomena, all actions of the body are subject to necessary law.

### **Generalization of Will to Inorganic Nature**

- The will is manifest in human behavior insofar as its actions follow upon conscious motives.
- Other animals are said to have will because of their ability to represent the world, though they act instinctively and not from conscious motives.
- Will also acts blindly in our own body, in involuntary actions such as digestion.
- The “final step” is to generalize what we find in organic beings to inorganic nature, which acts “according to universal, immutable laws” and without motive.

- There we find actions which very much resemble the acts of will which we recognize in ourselves.
- The only difference between the two is that behavior following motives is complex and much harder to predict than the behavior of the inorganic world.

### **Character**

- The Fourth Book of *The World as Will and Representation* concerns the actions of human beings, in light of our new-found knowledge of the world as will.
- This is described as the “most serious” part of the whole book, the part which is of great interest to everyone.
- We begin in §55, where the claim that the will is free but phenomena are necessitated is repeated.
- In the case of humans, actions are caused by motives, and motives are the result of the character of the individual.
- With one exception, to be discussed below, actions resulting from motives are necessitated, like the actions of all other phenomena.
- We mistakenly apply the freedom of the will as thing-in-itself to our actions as objectifications of the will.
- Coarse and uncultured people vigorously defend free will, while profound philosophers and religious thinkers deny it.

### **Empirical and Intelligible Character**

- The character which necessitates the actions of human beings was called (originally by Kant) the “empirical character.”
- The empirical character of an individual itself is a consequence of necessary laws.
- However, we can also attribute to humans an “intelligible character.”
- The intelligible character “is the will as a thing-in-itself, in so far as it appears in a definite individual in a definite degree.”
- The intelligible character is outside time, and as a consequence is indivisible and unalterable.
- Ultimately, the intelligible character is what we really are, and the empirical character merely manifests the intelligible character.
- Since the intelligible character is unalterable, we do not “freely” choose to be what we are.

### **The Illusion of Freedom**

- One reason that we think that our acts are free because we feel that they are original and arbitrary.
- Another reason is that we do not know in advance how we will act.
  - Our actions are the consequence of our intelligible character, which itself is unknown to us.
- When we deliberate and weigh the consequences of actions against one another, we do not decide what to do.
- Our decision comes from our inner nature, which is “inscrutable and impenetrable” to the intellect.
- Philosophers such as Descartes reverse the relation when they regard will as an act of thought.
- All that knowledge does, however, is to illuminate the character of the individual.

### **Motives**

- Motives for action cannot change the intelligible character of a person.
- At most, they lay out different paths for satisfying the efforts of the will.
- Motives are effective only in the presence of knowledge, which itself influences our behavior.
  - This accounts for the apparent changes that take place in character.
- “Ultimately we become acquainted with ourselves as quite different from what *a priori* we considered ourselves to be; and then we are often alarmed at ourselves.”
- One can only repent of what one has done from ignorance, haste, etc., not of what was willed.
- The complications of human motives in deliberation hide the necessity of the will, which is more obvious in other animals.

### **Virtue and Dogma**

- Sections 66 and 68 discuss the nature of virtue.
- Virtue is not the outcome of moralizing, because moralizing does not motivate.
- What motivates is “intuitive knowledge that recognizes in another’s individuality the same inner nature as one’s own.”

- The only value of ethical, religious, or philosophical dogmas is that they serve as formulas that the virtuous man has in him.
- On the other hand, dogmas can influence how people behave, though not what their moral worth is.
- Bad people perform bad deeds because they are bad, and good people perform good deeds because they are good.
- Even if it could be brought about by moralizing that no one commits any crimes, there would be no effect on virtue.

### **Justice**

- In §65, Schopenhauer had described the nature of the *bad*.
- Badness is the result of egoistic concern for only one's own well-being.
- Justice is the negation of the bad, so that the will of the just person never violates the will of any other person.
- Thus the just person respects the rights and property of all.
- To some extent, he sees through the principle of individuation and recognizes his own inner being in the other.
- However, he still recognizes a difference between himself and the other.

### **Benevolence**

- The benevolent or philanthropic person sees completely through the principle of individuation and is willing to sacrifice himself for the welfare of others.
- In this case, knowledge of the oneness of apparently different beings allows mastery of the blind cravings of the will.
- Good conscience, or “the satisfaction we feel after every disinterested deed,” is the verification of our knowledge of oneness with others.
- While the egoist is inflicted with anxiety given the troubles of the world, the benevolent person can feel a serenity of disposition.
- There are not “oughts” in morality, but only the recognition of the self in the other.
- This results in virtue and bliss, and is the path to salvation.

## Salvation

- If someone seeing through the principle of individuation attains “a high degree of distinctness,” there will be an effect on the will even greater than the satisfaction he finds in disinterested deeds.
- The sufferings of all beings are recognized as his own, and accordingly they are taken on as his own.
- In consequence, he recognizes the baleful effects of the will to live and sees that it should be denied.
- The result is “voluntary renunciation, resignation, true composure, and complete will-lessness.”
- This deliverance from life and suffering is “true salvation.”
- The egoist is immersed in the will cannot deny it, but the virtuous person can find “unshakable peace” and “the highest joy and delight in death.”

## Nothingness

- Section 71 is the final chapter in the first edition of *The World as Will and Representation*, and in it Schopenhauer’s ethics is completed.
- He begins by raising an inevitable and irremediable objection.
- The saintly surrender of the will “now appears to us as a transition into empty *nothingness*.”
- The world as representation is the “mirror” of the will, and the denial of the will must result in the disappearance of the mirror.
- We could only have negative knowledge of the consequences of the denial of the will.
- The only positive knowledge we can have is through names that describe states of the saints, such as ‘ecstasy,’ ‘rapture,’ etc.
- The philosopher must recognize that the world is really abolished by the denial of the will.
- Our abhorrence of nothingness is simply a reflection of the will to live.

### **The Roles of Will and Intellect in Action**

- Chapter 19 of the supplement to *The World as Will and Representation* shows how will and intellect play different roles in human action.
- Apparently, intellect influences will, because what one is thinking of is followed by different moods.
  - One becomes sad upon thinking of a lost love.
- On the other hand, will can block altogether the intellect from having ideas abstractly known to be disagreeable.
- Intellect is indifferent with respect to its possible objects, but will is inclined toward some and away from others.
- Insofar as it pursues its own agenda, will is the force that determines the state of the intellect.
- The best image of the relationship between intellect and will is that of the sighted lame person carried on the shoulders of a strong blind person.
- The lame person may give direction to the blind person, but only the blind person can decide which way it will go.

### **The Inclinations of the Will**

- Which way the will is inclined to act can be discovered only through experience.
  - For example, I conceive a plan, but I feel reluctant to carry it out because it involves some difficulty.
  - When the difficulty is removed, I find myself filled with joy.
- Despite the confusion in my intellect, my will may be inclined in a certain direction without my knowing it.
- The ancient Greek injunction, “Know thyself,” is thus quite difficult to carry out.
- Because we often do not know ourselves, the moral worth of our actions cannot be based entirely on our conscious intentions.
- Some of our motives are merely imagined, and action is required to determine whether they are real, and hence whether our actions are moral.