

Arthur Schopenhauer

Christopher Janaway

Biography

Schopenhauer, one of the great prose-writers among German philosophers, worked outside the mainstream of academic philosophy. He wrote chiefly in the first half of the nineteenth century, publishing *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation), Volume 1 in 1818 and Volume 2 in 1844, but his ideas became widely known only in the half-century from 1850 onwards. The impact of Schopenhauer's philosophy may be seen in the work of many artists of this period, most prominently Wagner, and in some of the themes of psychoanalysis. The philosopher most influenced by him was Nietzsche, who originally accepted but later opposed many of his ideas.

Schopenhauer considered himself a follower of Kant, and this influence shows in Schopenhauer's defence of idealism and in many of his central concepts. However, he also departs radically from Kant. His dominant idea is that of the will: he claims that the whole world is will, a striving and mostly unconscious force with a multiplicity of manifestations. Schopenhauer advances this as a metaphysical account of the world as it is in itself, but believes it is also supported by empirical evidence. Humans, as part of the world, are fundamentally willing beings, their behaviour shaped by an unchosen will to life which manifests itself in all organisms. His account of the interplay between the will and the intellect has been seen as a prototype for later theories of the unconscious.

Schopenhauer is a pessimist: he believes that our nature as willing beings inevitably leads to suffering, and that a life containing suffering is worse than nonexistence. These doctrines, conveyed in a literary style which is often profound and moving, are among his most influential. Equally important are his views on 'salvation' from the human predicament, which he finds in the denial of the will, or the will's turning against itself. Although his philosophy is atheist, Schopenhauer looks to several of the world religions for examples of asceticism and self-renunciation. His thought was partially influenced by Hinduism at an early stage, and he later found Buddhism sympathetic.

Aesthetic experience assumes great importance in Schopenhauer's work. He suggests that it is a kind of will-less perception in which one suspends one's attachments to objects in the world, attaining release from the torment of willing (desire and suffering), and understanding the nature of things more objectively. The artistic genius is the person abnormally gifted with the capacity for objective, will-free perception, who enables similar experiences in others. Here Schopenhauer adopts the Platonic notion of Ideas, which he conceives as eternally existing aspects of reality: the genius discerns these Ideas, and aesthetic experience in general may bring us to comprehend them. Music is given a special treatment: it directly manifests the nature of the will that underlies the whole world.

In ethics Schopenhauer makes thorough criticisms of Kant's theory. He bases his own ethical views on the notion of compassion or sympathy, which he considers a relatively rare quality, since human beings, as organic, willing beings, are egoistic by nature. Nevertheless, compassion, whose worldview minimizes the distinctness of what are considered separate individuals, is the only true moral impulse for Schopenhauer.

1. Life

Arthur Schopenhauer was born in Danzig in 1788 into a wealthy and enlightened business family. Following a childhood of sound school education and wide travel in Europe he attended the universities of Göttingen and Berlin, gravitating to philosophy after studying a number of subjects. He was most impressed by the writings of Kant and Plato, but also came across the Hindu Upaniṣads. These three he later claimed as his greatest influences. However, Schopenhauer's early impressions of the German university system were not favourable. He found the lectures of Fichte in particular to be pretentious and vacuous. While his inheritance from his father allowed Schopenhauer financial security, he developed a contempt for professional university philosophy which eventually became focused on Hegel, its leading figure.

The most creative period of Schopenhauer's life was the decade 1809–18, when he was in his twenties. He gained his doctorate in 1813 with a dissertation entitled *Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde* (On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason), a work which he always regarded as integral to his philosophy and which he revised substantially for republication in 1847. In 1816 he published a short work *Über das Sehn und die Farben* (On Vision and Colours), which had its origin in a collaboration with Goethe.

The work which outshines all Schopenhauer's others, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation), was published in 1818. It aimed to present a complete philosophical system, starting from a modified Kantian idealism and a metaphysics of the will embracing both the self (the microcosm) and the world (the macrocosm), and moving on to present original doctrines concerning aesthetics, ethics and the nature of human existence. Schopenhauer adhered to the philosophy of this work for the remainder of his life, and revised it for publication in 1844 with the addition of a second volume of elucidatory essays that more than doubled its length. There is little genuine intellectual development in Schopenhauer beyond 1818. His later writings give more reflective expression to the same set of doctrines.

Schopenhauer made an abortive attempt to begin a career at the University of Berlin in 1820, but scheduled his lecture at the same hour as Hegel's and had no audience. His hatred for Hegel's philosophy and the university system became intense. His own work, which he considered a great contribution to philosophy, went almost unnoticed. After a period of instability Schopenhauer settled in Frankfurt am Main in 1833, and remained there, leading a largely solitary life, until his death in 1860. His publications during this period were *Über den Willen in der Natur* (On the Will in Nature) (1836), *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik* (The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics) (1841), the second, two-volume edition of *The World as Will and Representation* (1844), the second edition of *On the Fourfold Root* (1847) and *Parerga und*

Paralipomena (Parerga and Paralipomena) (1851). In the final decade of his life he prepared second editions of *On the Will in Nature* and *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, and in 1859 a third edition of *The World as Will and Representation*.

All Schopenhauer's publications from the 1830s onwards were designed to defend and amplify the ideas set out in *The World as Will and Representation*. *On the Will in Nature* attempted to support the metaphysical doctrine of the will with empirical evidence taken from the various sciences. *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics* is a compilation of the separately written essays *Über die Freiheit des menschlichen Willens* (*On the Freedom of the Human Will*) (1839) and *Über die Grundlage der Moral* (*On the Basis of Morality*) (1840). These were composed as entries to essay competitions set in Norway and Denmark. Because of the anonymity of the competitions, Schopenhauer could not rely on a full exposition of his philosophical system. The result is a pair of well-argued, self-contained essays which make an interesting contribution to ethics.

After the publication of *Parerga and Paralipomena*, a wide-ranging collection containing substantial philosophical essays, polemical pieces and popular aphorisms, Schopenhauer's philosophy was more widely recognized, and in old age he began to enjoy something of the popularity which continued for half a century after his death. During this time he became through his writings one of the greatest intellectual figures in European culture, and his influence may be traced in different ways in, among others, Wagner, Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Hardy, Freud, Jung, Proust, Thomas Mann and Wittgenstein.

2. Early work

At university Schopenhauer took greatest interest in the writings of Kant and Plato, and in certain doctrines of Hinduism. Volume 1 of his surviving *Manuscript Remains* (1966–75) shows that from around 1813 he was trying to produce a critical synthesis of these sources. Schopenhauer worked initially with a dichotomy between 'empirical consciousness' and what he called 'better consciousness'. He associated empirical consciousness with appearance, individuality and suffering, and saw the better consciousness as the experience of a higher reality in which the mind could penetrate beyond appearances, lose its sense of individuality, and enter a state free of suffering. The idea had both religious and aesthetic associations. Kant's influence is present in Schopenhauer's use of the appearance/thing-in-itself distinction and his attempt to characterize the empirical world in terms of the a priori forms of space, time and causality imposed by the subject of experience. The Platonic influence shows in the notion of a higher, pain-free cognition of a timeless reality lying beyond the empirical. From the Hindu writings he adopted the doctrine of the veil of *māyā*, the view that ordinary consciousness is enmeshed in illusion, and the idea that at a fundamental level the distinctness of individuals is illusory (see *Monism, Indian*). At this stage Schopenhauer was prone to conflate his disparate sources. For example, he assumed that Kant's thing-in-itself and Plato's Ideas were the same – a mistake which he later corrected, but whose effects his theory never entirely lost (see the opening of *The World as Will and Representation*, Third Book).

During the same period Schopenhauer wrote his dissertation, *On the Fourfold Root*, taking as his theme the principle of sufficient reason which states '*nihil est sine ratione cur potius sit quam non sit*' (nothing is without a ground or reason why it is rather than is not). This principle may concern distinct species of 'reason' or 'ground', and hence different species of explanation. Schopenhauer seeks to clarify matters by mapping out four distinct kinds of explanatory principle, which he calls the sufficient reason of becoming, the sufficient reason of knowing, the sufficient reason of being and the sufficient reason of acting. The framework of *On the Fourfold Root* is Kantian. Schopenhauer uses the dichotomy of subject and object, in which objects are the known and the subject is the knower that can never itself be an object of knowledge. What can be known as objects are representations (*Vorstellungen*) which the subject has. The four kinds of explanation in the dissertation concern different classes of representations and the connections between them.

Schopenhauer follows Kant in describing empirical consciousness as consisting of representations organized by the a priori forms of space and time. The empirical content that fills these forms is matter, appearing to the subject as distinct spatiotemporal objects. Schopenhauer's first kind of connection among representations is the 'principle of the sufficient reason of becoming', which asserts that every state that appears must have resulted from a change that preceded it. This version of the principle is thus the 'law of causality'. Schopenhauer's discussion of causality builds on but also criticizes Kant's, and is the longest and most successful section of *On the Fourfold Root*. Space and time also yield the distinct explanatory principle which Schopenhauer calls the 'principle of the sufficient reason of being'. This is supposed to cover reason-giving in mathematics. Schopenhauer here relies on Kant's idea that mathematics involves non-empirical, a priori intuition of spatial position and temporal succession. Space and time themselves are described as objects or representations for the subject, and the connections in space and time cognized a priori are termed relations of 'mathematical necessity'. Concepts are held to be another distinct class of representations. Schopenhauer calls them 'representations of representations', regarding them as derivative from perception by a process of abstraction. Concepts enable the subject to make judgments, and the 'principle of the sufficient reason of knowing' states that if a judgment is to express knowledge, it must be related to a ground – which may lie in perception, in inference from another judgment, or in the possibility of experience or thought as such. Finally, Schopenhauer states the 'principle of the sufficient reason of acting', or law of motivation, which says that every act of will is related to a motive which causes it. The subject's own will is the unique object of experience which this form of the principle concerns. Schopenhauer later extended his account of the will, but in general regarded his early analysis of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason as indispensable for understanding the rest of his thought.

3. *The World as Will and Representation*, First Book

Schopenhauer divides his main work into four books, both in the original Volume 1 and in the parallel, elucidatory Volume 2. Volume 1 also contains a long appendix entitled 'Critique of the Kantian Philosophy'. Schopenhauer regards himself as a follower of Kant, but he has many criticisms to make. For instance, he is scathing in his attack on Kant's architectonic ambitions,

his style of writing and his account of the Ideas of soul, world and God – Ideas of the ‘unconditioned’ supposedly produced by ‘pure reason’ itself, but which Schopenhauer finds suspiciously amenable to the parochial Christian tradition. This ‘Critique of the Kantian Philosophy’ is closely linked to Schopenhauer’s concerns in the rest of the work.

In the First Book Schopenhauer is primarily concerned with epistemology. He defends transcendental idealism, a doctrine whose outline and terminology he takes from Kant. Transcendental idealism states that the world of empirical things is a world of objects existing for the subject’s experience, not existing in itself; and that the reality of the empirical world (our representations) consists in its being organized in space, time and causality, the necessary principles of connection among representations, whose origin is in the subject. Of the Kantian categories Schopenhauer retains only causality. The empirical world consists of causally efficacious matter filling the forms of space and time.

A feature of Schopenhauer’s account which would have been anathema to Kant is his appeal to Berkeley’s philosophy. Schopenhauer argues that Kant’s transcendental idealism shares with Berkeley the claim that the world of empirical things is mind-dependent, the difference being that Berkeley’s contribution is exhausted by this insight, while Kant adds the account of the a priori conditions of experience to explain objectivity. Schopenhauer had researched Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason thoroughly, making an extensive comparison of the second edition with the first, which had fallen into neglect. He alleges that Kant’s commitment to idealism is more clearly apparent in the first edition but that he wavers in the second, in fear of being classified as a Berkeleian. Schopenhauer uses a number of arguments for idealism which are variants on arguments found in Berkeley (§3). He suggests that idealism is the only viable alternative to scepticism about the external world, that to imagine a world existing without the subject is impossible, and that realism commits its proponent to a world existing in the subject’s representations and to a parallel, redundant mind-independent world. But he chiefly relies on his concepts of ‘subject’ and ‘object’. All experience requires that there be both – ‘No subject without object’ and ‘No object without subject’ are, he says, self-evident truths. Schopenhauer appears confident that this is sufficient to show that material objects would not exist without a subject.

Schopenhauer’s account of the subject of experience is significant. This subject, he claims, can never be an object of experience. It is not identical with the person (since persons are, at least in part, bodily, and bodies are objects of experience). It is not identical with any part of the spatiotemporal, empirical world – not any individual thing within the world. Rather, he says, ‘each of us finds himself as this subject’ ([1818, 1844] 1969: 1, 5). Schopenhauer uses a number of images in describing the subject: it is like an eye that cannot see itself, or the focal point at which light rays are concentrated by a concave mirror.

At the same time Schopenhauer is keen to stress that each person, while ‘finding’ themselves as this pure subject, is a bodily thing within the world of objects. There is a deliberate tension in his account here. Throughout Schopenhauer’s philosophy idealism is set in contrast with a blunt form of materialism. Materialism, he says, cannot be the whole truth because it cannot account for the subject’s experience: ‘materialism is the philosophy of the subject which forgets to take

account of itself'. Yet in the same passage he maintains: 'It is just as true that the knower is a product of matter as that matter is a mere representation of the knower' ([1818, 1844] 1969: 2, 13). From an objective standpoint there is ultimately only matter in space and time – and this is true also of oneself considered from an objective standpoint. But from a subjective standpoint, he thinks, we must embrace transcendental idealism and its conception of the pure, non-objective subject.

Schopenhauer makes a sharp distinction between perceptual and conceptual representations. He claims (heretically, as far as Kant is concerned) that causality, one of the basic organizing forms of experience, is not conceptual. Like space and time, it is for Schopenhauer a form of intuition (*Anschauung*). Intuition or perception is the awareness of particular, causally connected, spatiotemporal objects through the senses. Concepts, for Schopenhauer, are quite different from this. Their role is in discursive thought or judgment which may have linguistic expression, and thus in reasoning. (He accuses Kant, perhaps with some justification, of not clearly separating the discursive role of concepts from their alleged role in organizing perception.) Schopenhauer has a clear view about the distinction between humans and other animals: it is simply that humans alone have concepts, language and reason. Animals have understanding (*Verstand*), however, which is the ability to perceive a world of objects, and is different not in kind but only in degree from human understanding. An interesting sub-theme in Schopenhauer is the kinship of humans and animals, rooted in his conviction that the possession merely of reason provides no grounds for regarding a species as superior. Schopenhauer regards reason (*Vernunft*) as a secondary capacity, whose 'abstract, discursive concepts... have their whole content only from the knowledge of perception, and in relation to it' ([1818, 1844] 1969: 1, 35).

4. The World as Will and Representation, Second Book

The Second Book moves away from Kant and brings into play Schopenhauer's conception of the will. He argues that all processes in nature are fundamentally a kind of striving or end-seeking (usually unconscious) for which the term 'will' is the most appropriate. The governing aim here is metaphysical – the will provides Schopenhauer with an account of the nature of the world-in-itself, including the underlying nature of the individual human being. At the same time he believes that evidence from animal behaviour, psychology, the natural sciences and ordinary human experience gives confirmation of his view.

The argument begins with the question: How is one aware of one's own body? Schopenhauer's previous account of the subject in the First Book severed the knower from the known: the possessor of empirical knowledge surveyed the totality of objects comprising the spatiotemporal world, but was at no place within that world. But if I am such a subject, the body I call mine will be for me simply 'an object among objects', and I will not understand its movements except by the kind of observation and inference I apply to all empirical processes. As Schopenhauer says, this is not how things are: I do not generally relate to my body's movements in this way. I understand them 'from inside', and I understand them as my 'will'.

Schopenhauer's view of action is firmly anti-dualist. 'Act of will' is not, for him, the description of any purely mental event:

The act of the will and the action of the body are not two different states objectively known, connected by the bond of causality; they do not stand in the relation of cause and effect, but are one and the same thing, though given in two entirely different ways, first quite directly, and then in perception for the understanding.

([1818, 1844] 1969: 1, 100)

This means that the account Schopenhauer gave earlier of the subject and its relation to a world of objects is now seen as inadequate. As subjects of action, we are bodily: when someone acts, the manifestation of will occurs directly in their body.

Schopenhauer goes further and states that ‘the whole body is nothing but objectified will’. Here we must be careful. He calls the process of digestion, for example, one in which will manifests itself. But he does not mean that the digestive system develops and functions in conscious or rational pursuit of a goal. The term ‘will’ applies equally to ‘blind’ processes, and Schopenhauer wishes to regard the whole body as an expression of will only in the sense that its processes, such as digestion, can be explained by the end they serve for the organism. This part of his philosophy centres around his conception of the will to life (*Wille zum Leben*). Life is not an end which is consciously or rationally chosen by living things – primarily, this is not even the case with living things that are conscious and rational – but their morphology, behaviour and psychology convince Schopenhauer that life is the end for which they are organized. He paints a vivid picture of the whole of animate nature as forever striving, struggling and competing to live and to further life by producing offspring. Conscious, rationally caused willing in humans is merely the highest sophistication of this will to life that permeates nature.

Since human beings are as much organic expressions of the will to life as any other living thing, Schopenhauer thinks we should not overestimate the fact that we are subjects of knowledge, applying the classifications of space, time and causality, understanding the empirical world and making rational judgments. We are organisms whose brains and other physiological processes enable us to perform these functions, but the innermost core of the human being, as of every organism, is the will. Our mental processes are almost always at a deeper level subservient to the ‘blind’ will to life. Schopenhauer sees a complex interplay between this will and the conscious intellect. His idea that the intellect is often forced to follow the ‘secret purposes’ of an underlying will which it cannot control has been seen as a precursor of Freud’s view of the unconscious. Freud also acknowledged that Schopenhauer had prefigured him in his treatment of sexuality. Schopenhauer links sexuality with the drive to reproduce, one principal way in which the will to life manifests itself throughout nature. He is not surprised, therefore, to find that sex is constantly, if ‘secretly’, present in human behaviour: ‘It is the ultimate goal of almost all human effort; it has an unfavourable influence on the most important affairs, interrupts every hour the most serious occupations’ ([1818, 1844] 1969: 2, 533).

The doctrine of the will is, however, supposed to extend well beyond animate nature. All natural processes, including those such as magnetism and gravity, are to be seen as manifestations of will: as if, with or without consciousness, with or without life, every bit of the world must be striving for some end or other. It is essential to Schopenhauer’s thought that there is no supreme

end, no grand design, purpose or meaning. There is no answer to the question why the will wills as it does. Nevertheless Schopenhauer discerns a kind of internal order within the world as will. There are a determinate number of natural kinds: nature is not haphazard but falls into distinct species and repeatable law-like processes. Schopenhauer says that in addition to the individual things and events of the empirical world, there are eternal Ideas, those forms, such as 'lion' or 'oak tree', which may be shared in by many individual lions or oak trees. He calls these Ideas 'grades of the will's objectification'.

Schopenhauer's 'world as will' is an exercise in metaphysics, an attempt to say how the world is in itself. Thus it becomes clear that his idealism has a different purpose from Kant's: he wants to separate the empirical world, existing only in the subject's representations, from the world as it is in itself, in order to give a positive account of the latter. Schopenhauer's 'key' to the will as thing-in-itself is provided by action. The 'inner' awareness I have of my own will manifesting itself in the body supposedly points me towards what exists beyond the realm of representations altogether. My 'inner' awareness shows me that what I *am* in myself is will. Rather than maintain a kind of theoretical egoism (or solipsism) in which I alone have this essence – a view which he regards as irrefutable but mad – Schopenhauer advocates extending the same insight to the world as a whole.

Schopenhauer uses the expression 'the will', implying that the whole world of objects is the expression (or 'objectification') of one thing-in-itself. There cannot be a plurality of things-in-themselves: space and time are the principle of individuation (*principium individuationis*), but space and time do not apply to the thing-in-itself. Also the relation between the 'in itself' and the empirical cannot be causal, because causality has legitimate application only within the realm of representations. Schopenhauer says instead that the thing-in-itself (the will) 'objectifies itself' as a multiplicity of empirical things. This means simply that the world's experienceable aspect (the world as representation) consists of many spatiotemporal things, whilst considered as it is in itself (the world as will) it is not composed of distinct individuals (see Monism).

This metaphysical system is beset by problems. Even if it makes sense to say that the same world is, under one aspect, divisible into many empirical things, and under another aspect one single thing, there remain at least two further difficulties. First, it is unclear how Schopenhauer is entitled to any knowledge at all of the thing-in-itself. And second, there is some mystery as to why the thing-in-itself is best called 'will'. Schopenhauer says that our own willing is the nearest we ever come to knowing the 'in itself' of anything, so 'will' is the best term available to describe *the* thing-in-itself. Yet clearly neither the world-in-itself nor the majority of its phenomenal manifestations exhibit will in the way a human agent does. 'Will' threatens to become just a proper name for the world – but that in turn robs Schopenhauer's theory of any power to understand or interpret the world. He sets out to 'solve the riddle' of the thing-in-itself. It remains unclear how that is to be achieved.

5. The World as Will and Representation, Third Book

Schopenhauer associates the will with misery. The will to life drives us on through an ever-ramifying set of desires and goals, but we reach no ultimate point or final satisfaction. To have

desires unsatisfied is to suffer, to have needs is to be vulnerable to deprivation, and – the final irony – to be without needs usually brings only a state of empty boredom waiting to be filled by a further cycle of desires.

Yet there is alleviation of this condition, in the form of aesthetic experience, which is the topic of Schopenhauer's Third Book. The unifying thought in Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory is that one may have perceptual experience while the will is suspended. Such an occurrence is comparatively rare because the intellect is by nature a tool of the will and not prone to contemplating reality with the objectivity and freedom from desires that aesthetic experience demands. In aesthetic experience one is sunk in contemplation of some object and ceases to impose upon it the usual spatial, temporal and causal connections: 'we no longer consider the where, the when, the why and the whither of things, but simply and solely the *what*' ([1818, 1844] 1969: 1, 178).

Aesthetic experience, whether of nature or of art, has value for Schopenhauer because it is a temporary state of calm will-lessness, from which desire and suffering alike are excluded. But he also sees in aesthetic contemplation a cognitive change and an alteration in one's sense of self. The subject in aesthetic experience becomes unaware of its separateness from that which it experiences: 'the person who is involved in this perception is no longer an individual, for in such perception the individual has lost himself; he is *pure* will-less, painless, timeless *subject of knowledge*' ([1818, 1844] 1969: 1, 179). At the same time, the object of the experience is not merely the individual spatiotemporal thing, but one of the eternal Ideas fixed in nature. Schopenhauer's thinking here is as follows: individual empirical things are experienced when and only when the subject applies to its representations the a priori forms of space, time, and causality. But ordinary empirical knowledge is driven by the will: it consists in brain processes whose occurrence subserves the ends of the organism. Thus, if the intellect breaks away from its service to the will, it must leave behind the forms of space, time and causality. And since we experience individual spatiotemporal things only because we impose these forms, a timeless and spaceless experience must have as its object something beyond individual spatiotemporal things. This doctrine is the descendant of Schopenhauer's earlier thinking about the 'better consciousness'. He believes that, by freeing one's intellect temporarily from the will, one gains a higher form of knowledge, and becomes a pure subject, objectively mirroring reality, and leaving behind one's identification with any individual part of the empirical world.

Although he recognizes that nature provides many opportunities for this kind of elevated contemplation, Schopenhauer's main interest is in art, where the spectator's experience is mediated by the activity of the artist. For Schopenhauer the true artist is a genius, by which he means someone whose intellect – the capacity for perception, not concept-use or reasoning – is abnormally powerful and able to function in greater isolation from the will. The genius can discern the universal in the particular with greater objectivity, as it were on behalf of the rest of us, and convey this insight in perceptible form. Schopenhauer says emphatically that conceptual thinking, by contrast, is unfruitful in the arts.

Schopenhauer's writing is informed by a wide knowledge and appreciation of the various arts. He discusses architecture, painting of different genres, sculpture, poetry and drama. Each art

form has Ideas (or ‘grades of the will’s objectification’) which it is especially able to reveal. This enables Schopenhauer to place the arts in a hierarchy. At the lower end, architecture, for example, enables us to know the fundamental Ideas of gravity, cohesion and rigidity. Landscape painting displays Ideas of inanimate nature and the plant world. Other paintings reveal the Ideas of different species of animals, and finally of human beings – but the highest art form, whose speciality is the Idea of humanity in all its complexity, is poetry.

At the very pinnacle stands tragedy, which has a special significance for Schopenhauer, since the eternal Idea of humanity which it makes known contains the most profound picture of the misery of our condition. Yet tragedy’s value for Schopenhauer does not lie solely in this knowledge of what he calls ‘the conflict of the will with itself’. He contends that the best tragedies present the hero’s will turning away from life and adopting a sublime resignation in the face of suffering – thus exemplifying the attitude which he later argues is the only genuine ‘salvation’ (see Tragedy §5).

Schopenhauer’s account of music is especially noteworthy. He suggests that while the other arts all attempt to stimulate knowledge of Ideas by depicting individual things, music ‘is as *immediate* an objectification and copy of the whole *will* as the world itself is’ ([1818, 1844] 1969: 1, 257). The will expresses itself as the phenomenal world; the same will expresses itself again in music, which bypasses the level of Ideas altogether. Thus Schopenhauer maintains that the appeal of music lies in its copying the patterns of striving and resolution of the will, to which we respond because they resonate with our lives as willing beings. But no personal strivings or sufferings enter into music:

Music does not express this or that particular and definite pleasure, this or that affliction, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, or peace of mind, but joy, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, peace of mind themselves, to a certain extent in their abstract nature.

([1818, 1844] 1969: 1, 261)

Hence the value of music to the listener may also be that of a will-less calm (see Music, aesthetics of §9).

6. The World as Will and Representation, Fourth Book

The Fourth Book of *The World as Will and Representation* concerns ethics, taken broadly to include questions about the value of human existence, and what kind of happiness or salvation we may hope for. Schopenhauer gives his views here on the nature of morality and the question of free will and responsibility. These views are equally well stated (or perhaps better stated) in *On the Freedom of the Will* and *On the Basis of Morality*. It is only in *The World as Will and Representation*, however, that his conclusions about the human condition and his advocacy of denial of the will are presented with their full power.

Schopenhauer gives an elegant case for determinism, making a distinction between freedom to act, which one has when there are no impediments to one’s doing what one wills, and freedom to will. The latter raises the important question: given that one willed to do such and such, could one have willed a different course of action? Schopenhauer suggests that acts of will are caused

by a combination of one's permanent unchanging character and motives, which are representations of states of affairs in the world. No act of will could have failed to occur if the same motives and the same character had been present. In this sense there is no free will. Yet the feeling that we are responsible for our actions remains. Schopenhauer tries to account for this by saying that we feel responsible for what we are – for our unchanging, intelligible character, a character which is supposedly what we are beyond the realm of the empirical (see Free will).

This view has a Kantian ancestry. But in his moral theory Schopenhauer is generally critical of Kant. He is unimpressed by the notion of a categorical imperative, seeing it as a relic of the idea that commands are issued by the absolute authority of a divine being. He also questions Kant's linking of morality to rationality; other animals for Schopenhauer should be accorded moral status, and the fact that they lack rationality is irrelevant (see Kant, I.). His own account of morality is simple. The one genuine moral impulse is compassion (or sympathy, *Mitleid*), which he says is present in each human being in some degree. Individuals governed by compassion apprehend the world and their place in it in a superior way, and they and their actions are good.

Each individual's character – which for Schopenhauer is inborn and unchanging – has some combination of the ingredients of egoism, compassion and malice. Malice is the impulse to seek another's harm, egoism the impulse towards one's own well-being and the avoidance of harm to oneself. Egoism is the greater part of most natures, according to Schopenhauer, since as manifestations of the will to life we must strive continually to survive and further ourselves. Pure malice is as much an exception as pure compassion, but both impulses must be accepted as facts of human nature. Compassion is the impulse to seek another's well-being and to prevent their suffering, and is grounded in a vision of the world which sets less store than usual on divisions between individuals: the good man, says Schopenhauer, sees everywhere 'I once more'. The metaphysical foundation for this is the claim that individuation is not an ultimate truth in the universe, since whatever appears as distinct at the empirical level is, at the level of the 'in itself', one and the same will. If individuality is thus illusory, compassion is more profoundly justified than egoism.

The core of Schopenhauer's pessimistic assessment of the value of human life lies once again in the opposition between the individual and the world as a whole. One's existence as a bodily, striving individual emerges not only as illusory (when viewed from the highest metaphysical vantage point), but as pernicious. To be an individual in which will manifests itself is inevitably to be open to suffering. But neither the striving of which the individual's life is full, nor the suffering which accompanies it, nor the temporary achievement of satisfaction which so soon induces boredom, has any higher point or value. Schopenhauer concludes that existence as an individual human being is always a worse alternative than nonexistence. 'In fact,' he proclaims, 'nothing else can be stated as the aim of our existence except the knowledge that it would be better for us not to exist' ([1818, 1844] 1969: 2, 605). He also argues that we inhabit the worst of all possible worlds.

Death is not something to fear, in Schopenhauer's view, since the world-will which expresses itself in this one fleeting individual continues undisturbed; death is 'the great opportunity no longer to be I...the moment of that liberation from the one-sidedness of an individuality that

does not constitute the innermost kernel of our true being' ([1818, 1844] 1969: 1, 507–8). Despite this, Schopenhauer does not approve of suicide, which he regards as a failure to accept life on proper terms. The suicide affirms life, but revolts against the particular sufferings life contains. The contrasting attitude which Schopenhauer advocates is denial of the will to life, an attitude which accepts the state of being alive but acquiesces in the suffering and the non-fulfilment of desires which it brings.

The question arises whether denial of the will to life is, paradoxically, something one can bring about at will. Schopenhauer appears to think not, since he talks of 'those in whom the will has turned and denied itself' and says denial of willing 'is not to be forcibly arrived at by intention or design...it comes suddenly, as if flying in from without' ([1818, 1844] 1969: 1, 404). It is as though the will to life is a distinct agency from the individual in whom it dwells. There are two routes to this turning of the will. One is the life of what Schopenhauer calls a saint. Such a person has knowledge of the illusoriness of individuation, and their individual will is 'quieted' thereby. The attitude of saints is one of such overwhelming compassion that they do not seek to further their own ends in distinction from those of others, nor to avoid harm to themselves. The other path leading to the turning of the will is to undergo suffering so great that one's will to life gives out spontaneously, while yet one is still alive. Those in whom the will has turned attain a state which Schopenhauer describes as 'resignation, true composure, and complete will-lessness'. He asks us to consider the blissful state of aesthetic contemplation, and then to imagine it prolonged: such, he claims, is the state of will-less self-denial that is the only genuine 'salvation' for humanity. Since our existence as bodily, striving individuals is one we would have been better without, the only remedy lies in achieving a vision of the world which attaches the lowest possible importance to one's individuality.

List of works

Schopenhauer, A. (1946–50) Schopenhauers sämtliche Werke, ed. A. Hübscher, 7 vols, Wiesbaden: Brockhaus.

(The definitive edition of Schopenhauer's published works.)

Schopenhauer, A. (1977) Arthur Schopenhauer: Zürcher Ausgabe, ed. A. Hübscher, 10 vols, Zurich: Diogenes.

(An accessible paperback version of the above.)

Schopenhauer, A. (1813, 1847) Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde, trans. E.F.J. Payne, On The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974; trans. F.J. White as Schopenhauer's Early Fourfold Root, Aldershot: Avebury, 1997.

(Schopenhauer's doctoral dissertation, which he later substantially revised, and regarded as integral to his philosophical system. The White translation also provides a commentary on the shorter 1813 version.)

Schopenhauer, A. (1816) *Über das Sehn und die Farben*; trans. E.F.J. Payne, *On Vision and Colors*, Oxford and Providence, RI, Berg, 1994.

(A short work instigated by Goethe's theory of colours, but diverging from it. Not regarded as important to Schopenhauer's philosophy.)

Schopenhauer, A. (1818, 1844) *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, trans. E.F.J. Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, New York: Dover, 2 vols, 1969; ed. D. Berman, trans. J. Berman as *The World as Will and Idea*: abridged in one volume, London: Everyman, 1995.

(The main work of Schopenhauer's life, from whose central doctrines he never deviated. The only work containing his whole system of thought. The abridged version is greatly condensed and loses the grand sweep of the original, but makes the remaining argument more accessible to the general reader.)

Schopenhauer, A. (1836) *Über den Willen in der Natur*, trans. E.F.J. Payne, *On the Will in Nature*, New York and Oxford: Berg, 1992.

(Schopenhauer's attempt to corroborate the doctrine of will stated in his main work by finding confirmations in science.)

Schopenhauer, A. (1841) *Über die Freiheit des menschlichen Willens*, trans. K. Kolenda, *On the Freedom of the Will*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1985.

(A clear, self-contained essay on the problem of free will.)

Schopenhauer, A. (1841) *Über die Grundlage der Moral*, trans. E.F.J. Payne, *On the Basis of Morality*, Providence, RI and Oxford: Berhahn Books, 1995.

(Schopenhauer's account of morality as based on compassion, preceded by a critique of Kant's ethics.)

Schopenhauer, A. (1851) *Parerga und Paralipomena*, trans. E.F.J. Payne, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974, 2 vols.

(A late work containing a mixture of philosophical essays expanding on themes dealt with in earlier works, and various aphorisms and ruminations.)

Schopenhauer, A. (1966–75) *Schopenhauer: Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, ed. A. Hübscher, Frankfurt am Main: Waldemar Kramer, 5 vols; trans. E.F.J. Payne, *Manuscript Remains*, Oxford, New York and Hamburg: Berg, 1988–90, vols 1–4.

(Schopenhauer's unpublished notes, ranging throughout his career.)

References and further reading

Atwell, J.E. (1990) *Schopenhauer: The Human Character*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

(Concentrates on action, the will and ethical theory.)

Fox, M. (1980) Schopenhauer: His Philosophical Achievement, Brighton: Harvester.

(A collection of articles written from various points of view.)

Gardiner, P. (1967) Schopenhauer, Harmondsworth: Penguin; repr. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1997.

(A comprehensive account of Schopenhauer's philosophy.)

Hamlyn, D.W. (1980) Schopenhauer, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

(A treatment of all major aspects of Schopenhauer's philosophy.)

Higgins, K.M. (1993) 'Arthur Schopenhauer', in R.C. Solomon and K.M. Higgins (eds) Routledge History of German Philosophy, vol. 6: The Age of German Idealism, 330–362.

(A short introductory essay.)

Jacquette, D. (1996) Schopenhauer, Philosophy and the Arts, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

(Essays by various authors on Schopenhauer's aesthetics and its influence.)

Janaway, C. (1989) Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

(Discusses the self, idealism, subjective and objective standpoints and Kant.)

Janaway, C. (1994) Schopenhauer, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(Written at an introductory level for non-specialists.)

Luft, E. von der (1988) Schopenhauer: New Essays in Honor of his 200th Birthday, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen.

(A varied collection of articles with a thorough bibliography covering works by and on Schopenhauer.)

Simmel, G. (1907) Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, trans. H. Loiskandl, D. Weinstein and M. Weinstein, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986.

(A classic comparative study of the two philosophers.)

White, F.C. (1992) On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, Leiden: E.J. Brill.

(A commentary on On the Fourfold Root.)

Young, J. (1987) Willing and Unwilling: A Study in the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff.

(A treatment of all major aspects of Schopenhauer's philosophy.)