# Decoding Schopenhauer's Metaphysics

The key to understanding how it solves the hard problem of consciousness and the paradoxes of quantum mechanics

# Contents

# Bibliography

## Other books by Bernardo Kastrup

*Rationalist Spirituality: An exploration of the meaning of life and existence informed by logic and science*

*Dreamed up Reality: Diving into mind to uncover the astonishing hidden tale of nature*

*Meaning in Absurdity: What bizarre phenomena can tell us about the nature of reality*

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*The Idea of the World: A multi-disciplinary argument for the mental nature of reality*

The perfected masterpiece of a truly great mind will always have a profound and vigorous effect on the whole human race, so much so that it is impossible to calculate to what distant centuries and countries its enlightening influence may reach.
Arthur Schopenhauer, in *The World as Will and Representation* (1818)

We philosophers ... are no thinking frogs, no objectifying and registering devices with frozen innards—we must constantly give birth to our thoughts out of our pain and maternally endow them with all that we have of blood, heart, fire, pleasure, passion, agony, conscience, fate, and disaster. Life—to us, that means constantly transforming all that we are into light and flame, and also all that wounds us ... Only great pain is the liberator of the spirit.
Friedrich Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science* (1882)

# Chapter 1

# Introduction

> *Before we can discern the new, we must know the old. The adage that everything has already happened, and that there is nothing new under the sun (and the moon), is only conditionally correct. It is true that everything has always been there, but in another way, in another light, with a different value attached to it, in another realization or manifestation.*
> Jean Gebser, in *The Ever-Present Origin* (1966)

Born in Danzig—present-day Gdańsk—to German-Dutch parents in 1788, Arthur Schopenhauer gained recognition as a philosopher only in the last decade of his life, in the mid-19th century. His main work, *The World as Will and Representation*, came to light precisely 200 years before I started writing the present book.

Today, Schopenhauer is best known for his psychology, ethics, aesthetics and prose style. When it comes to metaphysics, however, his philosophy has been considered "so obviously flawed that some people have doubted whether he really means it" (Janaway 2002: 40). This is tragic, for I believe Schopenhauer's most valuable legacy is precisely his metaphysical views: they anticipate salient recent developments in analytic philosophy, circumvent the insoluble problems of mainstream physicalism and constitutive panpsychism, and provide an avenue for making sense of the ontological dilemmas of quantum mechanics. As I shall soon

argue, there is certainly nothing "obviously flawed" about his views; much to the contrary. Had the coherence and cogency of Schopenhauer's metaphysics been recognized earlier, much of the underlying philosophical malaise that plagues our culture today—with its insidious effects on our science, cultural ethos and way of life—could have been avoided.

With the present book, I hope to contribute to changing this regrettable state of affairs. In the pages that follow, I offer a conceptual framework—a decoding *key*—for interpreting Schopenhauer's metaphysical arguments in a way that renders them mutually consistent and compelling. With this key in mind, it is my hope that even those who have earlier dismissed Schopenhauer's metaphysics will be able to return to it with fresh eyes and at last unlock its sense.

I admittedly interpolate Schopenhauer's assertions—i.e. I fill in the gaps in his argument—in a manner that some may consider too, well, creative. Let me acknowledge upfront that I may, *in some sense*, be guilty of this. In my defense, however, I offer the following contention: if one (re-)reads Schopenhauer's words *under the light of the interpretation elaborated upon here*, one will find it difficult to imagine that Schopenhauer could have meant anything substantially different from what I posit. So let my interpretation be judged not by the wording of isolated passages of Schopenhauer's writings, but by how well it brings Schopenhauer's *overall* metaphysical argument together in a coherent, unifying and clarifying way.

I only truly discovered Schopenhauer's metaphysics after having fleshed out my own views on the nature of reality; a decade-long effort—totaling seven books—completed with *The Idea of the World*. I thus brought to bear on my read of Schopenhauer an extensive preexisting background of related ideas and insights.

Two inferences could then reasonably be made from this

confession: first—and on a positive note—that my own work equipped and primed me for discerning the intended meaning of Schopenhauer's contentions, despite his relatively loose and seemingly contradictory use of words. After all, I had just spent years wrestling with the same problems he wrestled with, working out similar solutions, and could thus not only understand but also *recognize* Schopenhauer's contentions. Second—and this time on a negative note—it could also be argued that my prior metaphysical work imparts a structural bias in my efforts to interpret Schopenhauer: I am primed to read into his words a reflection of my own views.

Both inferences probably have some merit. Let me highlight, however, that throughout the writing of this book I have been aware of this inherent potential for bias and made deliberate efforts to avoid it. As much a reflection of persisting partiality as this very statement could still represent, I believe my analysis and conclusions are fairly objective. Readers should be able to assess whether this is or isn't the case based on how well I substantiate my argument in the pages that follow.

Another confession: Schopenhauer initially attracted me because of his ethics, his way of dealing with the sufferings of life, not his metaphysics. I began my exploration of his thought with Christopher Janaway's little book, *Schopenhauer: A Very Short Introduction*. In it, Janaway introduces Schopenhauer's ethics by first summarizing its metaphysical basis, the foundation upon which Schopenhauer builds the edifice of his broad philosophical system. In the many quotes of Schopenhauer's works included in the book, I believed to discern—to my surprise—clear similarities with the metaphysics laid out in my own work. Naturally, I felt his points were compelling.

Yet, Janaway peppered his book with criticisms of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. What he seemed to be making—or

failing to make—of Schopenhauer's words was quite different from what I thought to discern in them. Janaway saw problems and contradictions where I thought to see clarity, elegance and consistency. But since Janaway is the professed expert and I was just perusing quotes out of context, I initially suspected I was reading too much into them.

The only way to clarify the issue was to sink my teeth into Schopenhauer's *magnum opus*: the two-volume, 1,200-page-long third edition of *The World as Will and Representation*, in the same translation that Janaway himself used. Although Schopenhauer wrote a few other books discussing more specific topics, *The World as Will and Representation* stands as his only work of systematic philosophy (Young 2017), comprising the main articulation of his metaphysics.

In the ensuing months, I devoured the lengthy two-volume set, reading and re-reading it. I recognized in it numerous echoes and prefigurations of ideas I had labored for a decade to bring into focus. The kinship between my own work and what I was now reading was remarkable, down to details and particulars. Here was a famous 19th century thinker who had already figured out and communicated, in a clear and cogent manner, much of the metaphysics I had been working on. What better ally could I have found? And yet, bewilderingly to me, Schopenhauer's "metaphysics has had few followers" (Janaway 2002: 40). Its utter failure to impact on our culture for the past 200 years is self-evident to even the most casual observer.

The present volume is thus a product of both dismay and delight: dismay at how misunderstood Schopenhauer's metaphysics seems to be, even at the hands of presumed experts; and delight at the discovery that my own metaphysical views have such a clear and solid historical precedent.

My goal with this book is thus two-fold: on the one hand, I aim to

rehabilitate and promote Schopenhauer's metaphysics by offering an interpretation of it that resolves its apparent contradictions and unlocks the meaning and coherence of its constituent ideas. On the other hand—and on a more self-serving note—I hope to show that my own metaphysical position, as articulated in my earlier works, isn't peculiar or merely fashionable, but part instead of an established, robust and evolving chain of thought in Western philosophy.

As an important bonus, by showing that Schopenhauer's metaphysics can be coherently interpreted in a way that reveals how much it has in common with my own, I also indirectly situate my work in the context of earlier Western thinkers, such as Spinoza, Berkeley, Kant and Hegel, as well as Eastern philosophical traditions. After all, Schopenhauer himself explicitly situated his metaphysics in that broader context.

It is critical that those who hope to truly understand Schopenhauer do *not* expect from him the kind of rigorous, consequent, consistent use of terms that is today characteristic of analytic philosophers. Needless to say, Schopenhauer preceded analytic philosophy by a century. His intended denotations of key terms are *context-dependent*. He may, for instance, use the term 'consciousness' in the sense of explicit or meta-cognitive awareness in one context, and then in the sense of mere experience in another. Analogously, he may use the verb 'to know' in the sense of true cognition in one context, and then in the sense of mere experiential acquaintance in another. And so on.

Indeed, to understand Schopenhauer's metaphysics one must read him *charitably*, always looking for the particular one, amongst the various possible denotations of a term, which fits most coherently into his overall scheme. The interpretational flexibility this requires is familiar to every non-philosopher in everyday conversation: despite often-loose use of words by one's

interlocutor, one knows what is meant because of the context. Indeed, what makes Schopenhauer so delightful to read is precisely that he writes in a colloquial manner—as if he were trying to verbally explain something to the reader in person—so we must reciprocate and interpret him with equally colloquial flexibility. This is perfectly feasible because Schopenhauer is delightfully verbose: he repeatedly recapitulates and summarizes—using different words and constructs—what he has already said.

The argument in the present book thus relies on a context-dependent interpretation of Schopenhauer's use of terms. Based on it, I shall argue that the key to resolving the seeming internal contradictions of Schopenhauer's metaphysics lies in understanding the difference between phenomenal consciousness and what is today called 'meta-consciousness'—or 'conscious meta-cognition'—in psychology. I shall elaborate on this difference, show that Schopenhauer explicitly leverages it throughout his argument, and then explicate how it reconciles his seemingly conflicting metaphysical claims.

I shall also attempt to bring out the overall sense and coherence of Schopenhauer's metaphysics by placing his key contentions in an overarching conceptual framework, built upon the notion of psychological dissociation. I shall substantiate this framework with present-day psychiatric literature on Dissociative Identity Disorder, a condition in which individuals manifest multiple disjoint centers of consciousness.

On a more general note, the present volume marks an attempt by me to return to my original writing style: brief, parsimonious, to-the-point expositions. In other words, I've tried to keep this book short, no space being wasted on related but ancillary ideas—let alone divagations and digressions—so it can be read comfortably in a weekend.

My objective in doing so is *not* to oversimplify things or

acquiesce to the demands of a culture of intellectual laziness—readers will soon notice that I may be guilty of many sins, but not this particular one—but, instead, to maintain focus and improve clarity. I prefer to be effective in conveying one key message than to be ineffective in addressing a variety of supporting or related ideas. The price of this frugality, however, is that this book requires attention from its readers: sometimes a crucial point is made in a single short paragraph, whose importance is disproportional to its length and can easily be overlooked in a casual read.

Still in the spirit of focus and parsimony, I shall restrict myself as much as possible to only two key sources: the Payne translation of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (1969), volumes 1 and 2—which I shall henceforth cite simply as 'W1' and 'W2,' respectively—and Christopher Janaway's *Schopenhauer: A Very Short Introduction* (2002). The latter I shall use as the source of present-day criticisms and objections to Schopenhauer's metaphysics, which I'll then attempt to refute. As for the former, because I aim to show that much of what I claim in the present book can be traced back to Schopenhauer's own words, I shall quote frequently from it. The many other entries in the bibliography are relatively ancillary, cited not to open up new fronts of argument, but simply to provide a more robust substantiation for my interpretation of *The World as Will and Representation*.

The focus on the two key sources mentioned above prevents me, of course, from further addressing the vast amount of secondary literature available today on Schopenhauer. For this reason, some may consider the present book less than scholarly. If so, so be it. Reviewing a multitude of secondary analyses doesn't seem—to me, at least—indispensable for accurately discerning what the primary work itself has to say: one assumes that its author is the whole and ultimate authority when it comes to his

own message.

*The World as Will and Representation* is Schopenhauer's key articulation of his ontology, while Janaway's *Schopenhauer: A Very Short Introduction* is probably the only text many students of philosophy today will ever read about Schopenhauer's thought. The former is the primary source regarding Schopenhauer's metaphysics, whereas the latter is arguably the most representative example of how that metaphysics is, in my view, misunderstood today. Contrasting the two is thus significant in and of itself, notwithstanding the remaining literature.

It is my hope that the present volume contributes original and interesting views on Schopenhauer's thought, despite—or perhaps precisely *because* of—its focus and parsimony.

# Chapter 2

# Brief overview of Schopenhauer's metaphysics

> *[O]ur vital energy comes from a Will which is wild, unprincipled, amoral ... a universe which is not necessarily structured and limited by a rational, benign plan, one where we cannot touch bottom, but which is nevertheless the locus of our dark genesis. ... Something which comes from the depths has its own numinosity ... The primitive has power, on which we need to draw, or before which we stand in awe, even as we may have to limit it, resist it.*
>
> Charles Taylor, explaining the ethos of Schopenhauer's philosophy in *A Secular Age* (2007)

Schopenhauer's metaphysics is characterized by a partition of the world into two categories, which he calls 'will' and 'representation,' respectively. The latter is the outer appearance of the world: the way it presents itself to our observation. The former, on the other hand, is the world's inner essence: what it is in itself, independently of our observation.

This partition may *superficially* resemble a form dual-aspect theory (Atmanspacher 2014); indeed, at the time of this writing, Wikipedia listed Schopenhauer's metaphysics as an instance thereof. According to dual-aspect theory, mentality and physicality are two different aspects or views of the same underlying, fundamental 'stuff' of nature, which in turn is neither

mental nor physical. Whether we apprehend this fundamental 'stuff' through its physical or mental aspect is a question of perspective or point of view. Those who consider Schopenhauer's metaphysics an instance of dual-aspect theory equate will with mentality and representation with physicality.

There is, however, no mention or hint in Schopenhauer's argument of anything that could constitute an ontological ground underlying both will and representation; no mention or hint of anything that will and representation could be mere aspects *of*. The only unifying ontological claim Schopenhauer makes is that everything is intrinsically *will*, representation being merely how the will *presents* itself to observation. As he puts it, the will "is the being-in-itself of *every thing* in the world, and is *the sole kernel of every phenomenon*" (W1: 118, emphasis added), whereas representation is merely the "will become visible" (W1: 107) or "translated into perception" (W1: 100). For Schopenhauer, representations without underlying will would be "like an empty dream, or a ghostly vision not worth our consideration" (W1: 99). There is nothing more fundamental than the will, the "inner nature" (W1: 97) of everything, for, as Schopenhauer repeatedly affirms, "The will itself has no ground" (W1: 107). It is thus at least difficult to see how dual-aspect thinking, as it is formally defined in philosophy, could be attributed to Schopenhauer.

Schopenhauer is, in fact, an *idealist* with regard to the physical world—i.e. the world of material objects interacting with one another in spacetime, according to causal laws. For him, this physical world exists only insofar as it consists of mental images—representations—in the consciousness of the observing individual subject. It has no existence beyond this individual subject. Schopenhauer writes that

> things and their whole mode and manner of existence are

> inseparably associated with our consciousness of them. ... the assumption that things exist as such, even outside and independently of our consciousness, is really absurd. (W2: 9)

A 'thing' for Schopenhauer is a physical *object* with a certain form, occupying a position in spacetime and obeying causal laws. Unambiguously, he claims that

> the demand for the existence of the object outside the representation of the subject ... has no meaning at all, and is a contradiction ... therefore, the perceived world in space and time ... is absolutely what it appears to be (W1: 14)

That the physical world is what it appears to be means that it is made of *qualities* such as color, tone, flavor, odor, etc.—i.e. *it is constituted by experiential states*[1] *of the observing individual subject*. And that's all there is to it. There is no consciousness-independent physical world, comprising separate objects with definite form, physical properties and position in spacetime, which somehow correspond isomorphically to our perceptual experience. According to David Chalmers' classification scheme of variants of idealism (2018), Schopenhauer's metaphysics can thus be considered a form of 'subjective idealism' in regard to the physical world.

But Schopenhauer doesn't stop here. He posits that 'behind' the representations—i.e. 'behind' the *physical* world—there lies the *world-in-itself*, which is "completely and fundamentally different" (W1: 99) from what appears on the screen of our perception.[2] This world-in-itself is what remains of the world when it is not being observed—i.e. when it is not being represented in the consciousness of an individual subject. The "forms and laws" ordinarily discernable through perception "must be wholly

foreign" to the world as it is beyond representation (*Ibid.*). In other words, the world-in-itself is *not* physical; in it there is no space, time or causality, which are themselves merely modes of perception (W1: 119-120).

The question that then arises is: What is the essential nature—the categorical basis—of the world-in-itself? Schopenhauer describes it repeatedly as *volitional states*—such as an "irresistible impulse," "determination," or "keen desire" (W1: 118)—which implies that the world-in-itself is mental. And although representations are also mental, the experiential states that constitute the world-in-itself are completely different from the qualities of representation. After all, what it feels like to desire or fear is completely different from what it feels like to perceive.

Surprisingly to me, there has been controversy about what Schopenhauer means by the word 'will.' Janaway, for instance, believes that

> we must enlarge its sense at least far enough to avoid the barbarity of thinking that every process in the world has a mind, a consciousness, or a purpose behind it. (2002: 37)

Nonetheless, I shall argue in this book that the world-in-itself, according to Schopenhauer, is indeed *mental*—i.e. constituted by experiential states, even though states very different from perceptual ones. If I am correct, Schopenhauer's position in regard to the world-in-itself fits into Chalmers' 'objective idealism' (2018).

In summary, Schopenhauer's world-in-itself is essentially mental, which implies objective idealism in regard to it. But the experiential states constituting the world beyond ourselves need not have any qualitative similarity whatsoever with the colors, tones, flavors, etcetera that we experience when observing such world. In other words, what it feels like to *be* the universe

surrounding us is rather different from what it feels like to *perceive* such universe. The experiential states underlying the world we inhabit are separate from, and at least ordinarily inaccessible to, us as individual observers; all we can access is their *representations*. The latter—which constitute what we call the 'physical world'—exist only insofar as *we* experience them as individual subjects. This implies subjective idealism in regard to the physical world.

I shall later clarify all this in more detail. For now, the important point is that Schopenhauer's metaphysics isn't a form of dual-aspect theory, but *idealist* through and through: it entails both subjective idealism—the physical world of objects in spacetime existing only as images in an individual subject's consciousness—*and* objective idealism—the world-in-itself being constituted by volitional experiential states.

# Chapter 3

# Our portal to the world

> *Here I am in the presence of images, in the vaguest sense of the word, images perceived when my senses are opened to them, unperceived when they are closed. ... The afferent nerves are images, the brain is an image, the disturbance travelling through the sensory nerves and propagated in the brain is an image too. ... To make of the brain the condition on which the whole image depends is in truth a contradiction in terms, since the brain is by hypothesis a part of this image.*
> Henri Bergson, in *Matter and Memory* (1896)

Schopenhauer divides representations into two contrasting categories: intuitive and abstract. Abstract representations correspond to conceptual reasoning, thus originating in the individual subject's own mind. Intuitive representations, in turn, originate in the perception of an external world. Haldane and Kemp even translate the original German "*intuitiven Vorstellung*" (Schopenhauer 1859: §3) as "idea of perception" (Schopenhauer, Haldane & Kemp 1909: §3).

Schopenhauer explicitly associates intuitive representation with perception. For instance, already in his opening definition, he writes that intuitive representation "embraces the whole visible world, or the whole of experience" (W1: 6). Since vision is a category of perception, the reference to the visible world implies

perception. Moreover, Schopenhauer routinely uses the word 'experience' in the restrictive sense of conscious *perception*. He "determines experience as the law of causality" (W1: 7), which, for Schopenhauer, is our means to "logically organize our *field of sensations*" (Wicks 2017, emphasis added).

The passage that perhaps most succinctly establishes the intended meaning of these various notions with respect to one another is this:

> The *concepts* [i.e. abstract representations] form a peculiar class, *existing only in the mind of man*, and differing entirely from the *representations of perception* [i.e. intuitive representations] ... It would therefore be absurd to demand that [the concepts] should be demonstrated in *experience*, in so far as we understand by this the real *external world* that is simply representation of perception (W1: 39, emphasis added)

Although intuitive representations or perceptions are the individual subject's portal to the external world, what Schopenhauer means by 'perception' is *more* than sense impressions alone—i.e. more than the data gathered through the mediation of the five senses. To see it, consider this more complete quote of Schopenhauer's definition: intuitive representation "embraces the whole visible world, or the whole of experience, *together with the conditions of its possibility*" (W1: 6, emphasis added). These conditions of the visible world's possibility are space and time, without which it could not be perceived.

Following Immanuel Kant, Schopenhauer claims that space and time can be "directly perceived" even "by themselves and separated from their content" (W1: 7). This implies that a person in an ideal sensory deprivation chamber still 'perceives'—i.e. somehow becomes experientially acquainted with—spacetime, although she sees, hears, smells, tastes and touches nothing. In

other words, Schopenhauer posits that we have internal access to spatio-temporal extension independently of the five senses. This "*a priori* perception" (*Ibid.*) of spacetime is even a prerequisite for perception proper: intuitive representations must couch sense impressions in endogenous spatio-temporal extension.

For Schopenhauer, spacetime is thus *an internal cognitive scaffolding inherent to the individual subject*, whereas sense impressions are projected onto—and thereby populate—this scaffolding as *mental images*.

In addition, perception for Schopenhauer also entails the immediate, non-deliberate recognition of cause-and-effect relationships in sense data. We don't just experience raw sensory input—otherwise we would see the world as a chaotic flow of disconnected, senseless pixels without recognizable entities or patterns of behavior—but project a structure onto it that organizes the corresponding sense data into "comprehensible and interrelated objects" (Wicks 2017), acting on one another according to causal laws. This—together with the underlying cognitive spatio-temporal scaffolding—is a function of what Schopenhauer calls the 'understanding' or the 'intellect,' terms he uses somewhat more restrictively than we do today.

So perception for Schopenhauer entails *cognitive processes* operating below the ordinary reach of introspection or explicit awareness. Although this is entirely consistent with how perception is regarded in modern psychology (cf. e.g. Bernstein 2010), one could argue that it blurs the boundary between intuitive and abstract representations, insofar as we equate the former with perception. After all, *both* now entail cognitive processes.

However, there is in fact no such blurring. The cognitive processes entailed by perception are autonomous and cannot—at least ordinarily—be accessed through introspection. Schopenhauer uses the qualifier 'immediate' to characterize them as such.

Conceptual reasoning, on the other hand, is deliberate and introspectively accessible, therein lying the defining difference between the two. I shall elaborate on this in more detail later.

For the sake of clarity, since the qualifier 'intuitive' nowadays has denotations very different from—even contrary to—what Schopenhauer intended, I shall henceforth refer to intuitive representations as 'perceptual representations.'

# Chapter 4

# The world as it is in itself

> *[For historically early man] there stands behind the phenomena, and on the other side of them from me, a represented which is of the same nature as me. Whether it is called 'mana', or by the names of gods and demons, or God the Father, or the spirit world, it is of the same nature as the perceiving self, inasmuch as it is not mechanical or accidental, but psychic and voluntary.*
> Owen Barfield, in *Saving the Appearances* (1957)

For Schopenhauer, the world-in-itself is *will*, all perceptual representations being 'objectifications' of this will—i.e. renditions of the will in the form of mental images in the consciousness of an individual subject. As such, the world *presents*[3] itself to us as images projected onto our internal cognitive spatio-temporal scaffolding of perception. Philosopher Itay Shani calls these mental images the "revealed order" (2015) and I the "extrinsic appearance" (Kastrup 2018a) of the world. But the world as it is in itself—i.e. its "concealed order" (Shani 2015) or "intrinsic view" (Kastrup 2018a) —is, according to Schopenhauer, something qualitatively quite different.

One can only become acquainted with the intrinsic view—the concealed order—of an aspect of the world by *being* this aspect. For without *being* it, one can only know it through how it presents itself in perception. There is, therefore, precisely *one* aspect of the

world whose intrinsic view we can access: *ourselves*. What it is like to be ourselves is, for Schopenhauer, our sole hint to what the world-in-itself is like. In his wonderfully aphoristic words, "we must learn to understand nature from ourselves, not ourselves from nature" (W2: 196).

The rationale behind this central idea of Schopenhauer's requires some elaboration. According to him, one can only talk of a plurality of individual entities or events in the context of spacetime extension: two entities or events are only separate insofar as they occupy different positions in space or time. Two stones existing in the present moment can only be said to be separate if one is here and the other is there. Two events unfolding in the same place can only be said to be separate if one occurs after the other. If you and I occupied the exact same volume of space at exactly the same time, we would overlap with one another and effectively be one.

Schopenhauer calls the carving out of the world into individual entities and events, as enabled by spacetime extension, the *"principium individuationis"* (W1: 112), or 'principle of individuation.' Without spacetime extension, all entities and events would overlap and become indistinguishable from one another; the whole world would become one indivisible, dimensionless whole.

Now, as we've seen, according to Schopenhauer the spatio-temporal scaffolding is a *cognitive feature of the intellect*; it exists only in the consciousness of the individual observing subject. Consequently, the partitioning of the world into a plurality of separate entities and events can also only exist in the intellect, in the form of representation. It is *us*, in perceiving the world, who break up its image into distinct pieces. Plurality is imposed by *us*, as a mode of our cognition, which motivates Schopenhauer to refer to it as a mere "illusion" (W2: 321). The world as it is in itself,

beyond representation, is outside spacetime and can, therefore, only be a unitary whole.

Since we and the world are then ultimately one, there must be a sense in which what it is like to be us—after we set all representations in our intellect aside—is akin to what it is like to be the world as a whole. By virtue of *being* ourselves we can then make inferences about the inner essence of the world.

But this key epistemic claim of Schopenhauer's—namely, that we can know something essential about the world at large merely by introspecting—doesn't rely exclusively on the idea of extra-spatiotemporal unity. Even if we grant that the world 'behind' representation is a collection of separate entities and events, an empirical argument can still be made: whatever we find out about our inner essence through introspection, our body, as it is represented on the screen of perception, is made of matter. Schopenhauer generalizes this observation by stating, "matter is that whereby ... the inner essence of things ... becomes perceptible or *visible*" (W2: 307, original emphasis). And since the world at large is—just like our body—*also made of matter*, we have reason to infer that the world at large is, in essence, also whatever it is we are, in essence. Assuming otherwise would entail postulating an arguably arbitrary discontinuity in nature. After all, the world at large is made of the same kinds of atoms and force fields our body is made of.

It is thus the empirical observation that all things perceived are made of matter—*including our body*—that still allows us to extrapolate our knowledge of our own inner essence towards the world at large, even when assuming the latter to be fundamentally constituted by separate—or at least separ*able*—entities and events.

Whether we come to it through the notion of extra-spatiotemporal unity or through inferring that "Matter is the visibility of the will" (W2: 308), the key epistemic insight underlying Schopenhauer's metaphysics is that we can

"understand nature from ourselves, not ourselves from nature" (W2: 196). This key insight is what allowed Schopenhauer to reach far beyond the limits of Kant's philosophy.

Through introspection, what Schopenhauer realized about his own inner essence—and, therefore, about the inner essence of the world as a whole—is something he considered appropriate to call the 'will.' This is a clear reference to volitional feelings. Moreover, as we've seen above, the Schopenhauerian thing-in-itself is only knowable by gauging what it is like to *be* it. And since Thomas Nagel's seminal 1974 paper—titled *What is it like to be a bat?*—philosophers have understood that what it is like to be something is the very *definition* of phenomenal consciousness (Block 1995, Chalmers 2003). For both these reasons, the world-in-itself, according to Schopenhauer, must be *experiential* in nature.

But because this conclusion leads to *seeming* contradictions and implausibilities in Schopenhauer's metaphysics—which I shall elucidate later—there are persisting doubts about it in the literature. I confess to feeling nonetheless dismayed at these doubts, for—to paraphrase Michael Tanner in an entirely analogous discussion (2001)—if by 'will' Schopenhauer meant something other than will, why didn't he then call it what he meant?

It's not like Schopenhauer is obscure in this regard: the will is "what is known *immediately* to everyone" (W1: 100, emphasis added) and "Consciousness alone is *immediately* given" (W2: 5, emphasis added).[4] So the will can only be (volitional) consciousness. Indeed, only experiential states can be known immediately. Nothing else can, for everything else is only accessible through the mediation of representation.

Schopenhauer directly associates the will with consciousness:

> what as representation of perception I call my body, I call my

> will in so far as *I am conscious of it* in an entirely different way ... the body occurs *in consciousness* in quite another way, *toto genere* different, that is denoted by the word *will* (W1: 102-103, emphasis added)[5]

Clearly, the will consists of experiential states.

Even in his extensive dismissal of solipsism—which he calls "theoretical egoism"—Schopenhauer uses the terms "mere phantoms" and "phenomena of the will" in reference to philosophical zombies and conscious organisms, respectively (W1: 104), thereby again equating the will with consciousness.

And as if all this weren't enough, at one point Schopenhauer refers to the will as "the inner, simple consciousness"[6] that constitutes "the one being" of nature (W2: 321). How could he be clearer?

A particular type of experiential state is more primarily associated with the will: after defining 'feeling' as "something *present in consciousness* [but which] is not a concept" (W1: 51, emphasis added), Schopenhauer claims that

> virtue and holiness [i.e. forms of conduct] result not from reflection, but from the *inner depth of the will* ... Conduct, as we say, happens in accordance with *feelings* (W1: 58, emphasis added)

So at least some of the experiential states we call 'feelings' are the same thing as—or at least very intimately related to—the inner depth of the will. Indeed, Schopenhauer repeatedly identifies feelings with the will. For instance, he says that "the inner nature of the world [i.e. the will] ... expresses itself intelligibly to everyone in the concrete, that is, *as feeling*" (W1: 271, emphasis added).

Despite all this, Janaway still claims that

> When I am conscious of my own willing in action, what I know is a phenomenal manifestation of the will, *not the thing in itself*. (2002: 39, emphasis added)

This conclusion cannot be true at least in some important sense, for after listing pleasure and pain as examples of feelings (W1: 51), Schopenhauer proceeds to distinguish them from any kind of representation:

> we are quite wrong in calling pain and pleasure representations, for they are not these at all, but *immediate affections of the will* (W1: 101, emphasis added)

So if some feelings aren't representations, either Schopenhauer is postulating a third category in his metaphysics—which would contradict his defining claim that the world is nothing but will and representation[7]—or we have to understand some feelings as the thing in itself in some sense. In other words, these immediate affections of the will must *be* the will in action. Contrary to Janaway's conclusion, there must thus be at least some important sense in which we, when consciously experiencing some of our feelings, know the will itself. Indeed, according to Schopenhauer, "the will ... shows itself as terror, fear, hope, joy, desire, envy, grief, zeal, anger, or courage" (W2: 212), endogenous feelings we are all directly acquainted with. I shall return to this later.

The difficulty here is the same apparent contradiction that permeates Schopenhauer's metaphysics: if the thing in itself lies outside spacetime,[8] it cannot be known insofar as knowledge must extend across our cognitive spatio-temporal scaffolding. Yet, Schopenhauer is definite when he claims that not only is the will known to us, it is "infinitely better known and more intimate than