**WHAT IS WILL?**

Nicoletta De Cian – Marco Segala, "What is will?", *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, 83, 2002. (p. 13-42)

**Résumé**

L’article discute les nombreuses définitions de la volonté données par Schopenhauer dans ses ouvres et manuscrits et les analyse en rapport avec leur contexte – quand et où elle furent prononcées – et leur genèse. La définition de la volonté dans la première édition du *Monde comme volonté et représentation* (1819) montre des différences importantes de celle élaborée dans le deuxième volume de l’ouvre (1844), tandis que la formation de la notion de volonté dans les manuscrits est profondément liée avec celle de rédemption. En outre, la discussion de Schopenhauer sur la volonté dépendait du débat philosophique autour de lui: durant les années 1810 était très différent de celui des années 1840. Le but de cet article est de établir à nouveau, grâce à l’approche génétique, la nature à la fois multiforme et complexe de la notion de volonté chez Schopenhauer.

**Abstract**

The paper discusses the several definitions of the will given by Schopenhauer in his works and manuscripts and analyses them according to their context – where and when they were asserted – and their genesis. The definition of the will in the first edition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819) shows important differences from that given in the second volume of the work (1844), while the formation of the notion of will in the manuscripts is deeply connected with that of redemption. Also, Schopenhauer’s discussions of the will depended on the philosophical debate around him: in the 1810s it was much different from that in the 1840s. The aim of the paper is to restore the manifold and complex nature of Schopenhauer’s notion of will.

**Pour citer cette page**

Marco Segala et Nicoletta De Cian, «What is will?[\*](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn1)», *Item* [En ligne],
Mis en ligne le: 02 septembre 2010
Disponible sur: http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242.

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[**1. CONTRADICTION!**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n1)

The definition of Schopenhauer's will has always aroused many discussions. Most commentators have taken the will to be an emblem of intrinsic dubiousness in Schopenhauer's philosophy and as heralding ruining paradoxes. Is the will the thing-in-itself? But we can have no knowledge of the thing-in-itself, ergo the system collapses. As far as it is an object of knowledge the will is not the thing-in-itself and the system is false in formulating “the world is will”. Besides, identifying will and the thing-in-itself Schopenhauer is unfaithful to Kant's *Kritik der reinen Venunft*, thus he has no legitimacy in declaring that he is Kant's unique and genuine heir.

In his *Denker gegen den Strom* (1973), Arthur Hübscher commented ironically on interpreters' ability to discover contradictions in Schopenhauer's writings: «an examination of the arguments pro and con yields a strange picture: they are founded always again on related pre-suppositions; they use similar objections and reasons; and they can finally be reduced to one formula». Hübscher blamed the commentators of not being able to comprehend Schopenhauer's argument about the transition «from the world as representation to the world as will». He invited them to acknowledge Schopenhauer's «authority over two elements» [empirical and metaphysical] and pointed out how difficult this exploit is. The philosopher is obliged to use a unique language, locked into the realm of representation in order to sketch the metaphysical dimension; he speaks out of «the comprehension of an actual meaning, now in the manner of suggestion and parable: from under the sign of the known and fathomable gleams the unknown and the unfathomable. … There is a confluence of the actual sense and of the pictorial sense, which endows Schopenhauer’s presentation with that true brightness and clarity, reaching to the lowest depths, and which yet always demands a special alertness».

Hübscher reminds us of the unfounded criticism on the “contradictory” *will as thing-in-itself* developed by important scholars such as Karl Ludwig Michelet, Christfried Albert Thilo, Eduard von Hartmann and Johannes Volkelt. In order to give a satisfactory solution of the problem and to clear up the fact that Schopenhauer did not go beyond the Kantian limits of knowledge, he refers to a famous letter from Schopenhauer to Frauenstädt and concludes: «if one still wanted to ask after this ultimate result … what the will was plain and simple, … then this question defies any sort of answer».[1](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn3).

It is evident that Hübscher's arguments have not gained attention. Discussions on “paradoxes” and “contradictions” in Schopenhauer's system continue – in particular among anglophone scholars. As observed by Steven Neeley in 1996, commentators take under exam what is problematic in Schopenhauer's writings in order to give help: to offer solutions, to express the true meaning of the philosopher's words, to eliminate confusion seeing as Schopenhauer is unable to avoid it[2](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn4). In particular it is the will which stimulates intervention in order to save the philosopher from himself.

[**2. THE RIDDLE OF THE WILL AS THING-IN-ITSELF**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n2)

In this paragraph we describe briefly – and chronologically – recent discussions about the will as thing-in-itself.

In his 1987 book, Julian Young sustained that the will cannot be the thing-in-itself. In declaring his faithfulness to Kant's doctrine about the limits of knowledge, Schopenhauer excludes the possibility of knowing the thing-in-itself and to name it as will. Young argues that to understand Schopenhauer's metaphysical discourse on will, we must «abandon the simple Kantian dichotomy between appearance and ultimate, noumenal reality and adopt instead a trichotomy, interposing … a third world distinct from either. This third world, non-noumenal and hence situated within the Kantian boundaries, yet esoteric and so distinct from the ordinary world, could then constitute the topic of metaphysical investigation». It is this, the “world as will” that Schopenhauer investigates in his main work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*[3](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn5).

In 1995, John Atwell observed that the riddle of the will comes out from Schopenhauer's ambiguity about the expression “thing-in-itself”. Will *is* the thing-in-itself when «“thing in itself” is only a short-hand term for “thing in itself in appearance”», «which means, in effect, that thing in itself is thing in itself only in relation to appearance, being actually the essence of inner nature of (the world as) appearance. In a phrase, the will is the thing in itself in appearance, […] the essence of appearance». The will *is not* the thing-in-itself when «“thing in itself” signifies ultimate reality, the noumenon (if one thinks of Kant) or, to say it best, unconditioned being». According to Atwell, this is the “mystical” conception of the thing-in-itself, which leads to Schopenhauer's doctrine of redemption («it is, indeed, all very mystical!»)[4](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn6).

The fallacy of Schopenhauer's argument on the “will as thing-in-itself” is also a crucial point in Christopher Janaway's analysis. The solution comes out from interpreting the will's metaphysics as suggested by Schopenhauer in *Ueber das metaphysische Bedürfniß des Menschen* (Volume 2 of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*). Janaway argues that «this metaphysics is to be immanent, not transcendent: it is not really about peeking behind the veil of appearance, for though it speaks of the “thing in itself”, it does not mean to do so “otherwise than in reference to appearance”». As Schopenhauer speaks of the thing-in-itself as the key to decipher the world («Entzifferung der Welt»), a tri-partite picture of the world appears: world as representation (empirically knowable), world as will (the “thing-in-itself in appearance”, known by philosophical reflection), and world as absolute and ultimate thing-in-itself (unknowable in principle). Janaway takes this interpretation agreeing with Atwell and censuring Young («there is little evidence of his [Schopenhauer's] thinking in terms of such a trichotomy»). It is curious, because Janaway's argument is similar to Young's[5](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn7).

Mainly devoted to examine Schopenhauer's relationship with Goethe and Kant, Paul Lauxtermann's book asks what is the authentic “principle” of Schopenhauer's system: the will? Or the human understanding, the faculty of knowing, capable to deny the will? Lauxtermann sees the doctrine of redemption (freedom from the will) as a paradox. As the intellect is the will that has become object and is able to deny the will itself, a paradox arises: the will's objectity can kill the will, or better, «God commits suicide». In Lauxtermann's view, the will as thing-in-itself «was the only way for Schopenhauer to avoid the solipsism» generated by the subjectivism, on which are based both the idealism of the world as representation and the physiological conception of eyesight and colours. The will serves to counterbalance subjectivism, and it shows «Schopenhauer's professed metaphysics» of the contraposition between appearance and the thing-in-itself. But this contraposition is not real, because «the ‘Thing in itself’ is interpreted as the innermost *core* of Nature rather than as something *transcending* Nature». Real contraposition, «Schopenhauer's *hidden* metaphysics», is between the world dominated by the immanent will and the transcendent world of *noluntas*, free from the will[6](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn8).

It is quite astonishing to find the adjective “transcendent” in the definition of such a central element of Schopenhauer’s philosophy like the *noluntas*. But Lauxtermann’s is not a lonely case. David Cartwright argues that the absolute thing-in-itself, which is beyond cognition, is transcendent; that «the consideration of transcendent played a significant role in the development of and form of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics»; that Schopenhauer’s «attempt to accommodate mysticism within his philosophy» provided him with the means to account for the transcendent status of the *noluntas*. Cartwright reaches these conclusions from the conviction «that there are two senses of “thing-in-itself”» - a relative one (corresponding to Atwell’s «thing in itself in appearance») and an absolute one (corresponding to Atwell’s “mystical conception”) - and that «the will is not the “thing-in-itself” in an absolute sense»[7](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn9).

We do not dwell upon these arguments, because the following discussion of the *Willensbegriff* will show their limits. Anyway, it is worth noting that nobody among the cited interpreters mentions the original German discussions about the will[8](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn10). Modern English-speaking commentators refer to some older English-speaking scholars (like Copleston and Gardiner), move from common assumptions and develop similar arguments. They propose their analysis and criticism as original. They do not consider the numerous studies, in German, French or Italian, which have discussed in different ways the questions arising from the doctrine of the will as thing-in-itself[9](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn11). They fit Richard Watson's description of scholars producing a «history of philosophy based primarily on English translations of philosophers who do not write in English, and on commentaries written only in English». Watson's judgement is severe: «this work on Englished texts is meant to be authentic history of philosophy. It is just deficient»; it «generates an Anglo-American school, in which interpretations of philosophers and systems evolve in isolation from the general body of scholarship in other languages»[10](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn12).

Besides, all the commentators cited above are orientated not simply to understand Schopenhauer but to reformulate from the beginning the groundstones of his system, in order to make it coherent. It is of little importance that Schopenhauer's unique world has been split up into two or three worlds, one of them being transcendent. Schopenhauer has always struggled against transcendence, but it appears more important to save Schopenhauer from his fallacies. Atwell’s advice is clear: «Schopenhauer would have been much better off if he had eschewed at least much of Kant's terminology, including “the thing in itself”». Janaway is convinced to have seen and solved the intrinsic frailty of the system: «if Atwell's reading makes us aware that Schopenhauer's programme can avoid gross inconsistency, the best we can say for Schopenhauer is that he does not uniformly demonstrate the same awareness». Lauxtermann is at the same time ironic and conscious of his contribution to ameliorate the system: «alas, we shall have to acquiesce in the fact that Schopenhauer did not take our advice». Cartwright wonders if Schopenhauer is honest as he speaks of the thing-in-itself which is beyond cognition. Only his interpretation saves Schopenhauer from being pronounced guilty[11](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn13).

[**3. ARGUMENTS**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n3)

Is Schopenhauer right, considering his assumptions and the development of his philosophy, when he declares he has unveiled the essence of reality? Above mentioned commentators answer no. But then, how is to judge Schopenhauer, who has insisted in sustaining that "the world is will" and "the will is the thing-in-itself"? We are facing two possibilities. Either Schopenhauer, in drawing up his metaphysics, was inexperienced and unable to see its fundamental contradictoriness; or his interpreters are not able to consider the will in the right way.

In the following paragraphs, we intend to show some aspects of the will not fairly appraised or neglected by the critics. The will appears paradoxical to them because their analysis is defective. Examining closely the will makes clear that Schopenhauer's arguments are justifiable.

We start examining the *Willenslehre* as presented in first edition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819). We discuss the *conceptual* nature of Schopenhauer's arguments and we show that the conceptualization of the will justifies the statement "the will is the thing-in-itself" (§ 4).

An analysis of the genesis of Schopenhauer's system follows considering 1811-14 manuscripts, when the concept of will has not yet appeared. Long before Hübscher’s *Nachlaß* edition it was clear that the will is the arrival point of Schopenhauer's thought[12](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn14). Today manuscripts are published and available in English too, but this aspect of the will as point of arrival of Schopenhauer’s theorizing is neglected. (§§ 5-7).

The next step is to examine how Schopenhauer discusses his system in relation to Plato, Kant, and the postkantians (§§ 8-10). Commentators do not make this kind of analysis, which is dedicated to understand the will *in the context* of the philosophical debate around 1800-1820. This debate however is essential to comprehend Schopenhauer's strategy in promoting his philosophy, especially when he declares he is the unique and genuine heir of Kant. It is even more important to appreciate the developments of the *Willensbegriff* after 1819. In particular, the philosophical context explains the reason why, in the second volume of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1844), the will becomes the "deciphering key" to the world (§ 11).

[**4. WILL AS CONCEPT**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n4)

Will comes on stage in § 18 of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, through the doctrine of the body's double knowledge «als Vorstellung in verständiger Anschauung» and «als jenes Jedem unmittelbar Bekannte, welches das Wort *Wille* bezeichnet». Schopenhauer makes immediately clear that the relationship between essence and phenomenon is explained by the concept of objectivation: body is «*Objektität des Willens*» (*objectivity of the will*). Through the analogic inference presented in § 19, the doctrine of double knowledge and the concept of objectivation lead to the foundation of the will's metaphysics on the argument that each phenomenon «seinem innern Wesen nach, das selbe seyn muß, als was wir an uns *Wille* nennen»[13](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn15).

Schopenhauer is certain of his definition of the will as essence: the will is in itself, free from representation. He specifies this position by stating: «ich erkenne meinen Willen nicht im Ganzen, nicht als Einheit, nicht vollkommen seinem Wesen nach, sondern ich erkenne ihn allein in seinen einzelnen Akten, also in der Zeit»[14](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn16). Schopenhauer's demand is evident: he wants both to confirm Kantian limits of knowledge within the phenomenal realm and to disclose the essence of the world. According to commentators this demand is unfounded and leads to contradiction. According to Schopenhauer evidently it is plausible. Of course it is a problematic demand, but starting from § 21 he confronts the questions and tries to dissipate all doubts.

The key to the solution is the conceptual knowledge: what everyone immediately knows *in concreto*, namely that will is the essence of its own body, must be accessible, as Schopenhauer says, *in abstracto*[15](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn17). It is through conceptual knowledge that we are able to extend to all nature the truth discovered in our own bodies: «diese Anwendung der Reflexion ist es allein, welche uns nicht mehr bei der Erscheinung stehen bleiben läßt, sondern hinüberführt zum *Ding an sich*»[16](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn18). The metaphysical truth that the will is the essence of world follows from an «Anwendung der Reflexion», the analogic inference introduced in § 21.

In the following § 22, the analysis proceeds. The thing-in-itself is never an object, yet nevertheless it can be thought of, i.e. it can be transformed into an object of thought. When it happens, the thing-in-itself «mußte … Namen und Begriff von einem Objekt borgen, von etwas irgendwie objektiv Gegebenem, folglich von einer seiner Erscheinungen … die vollkommenste, d.h. die deutlichste, am meisten entfaltete, vom Erkennen unmittelbar beleuchtete: diese aber eben ist des Menschen Willes. Man hat jedoch wohl zu bemerken, daß wir hier allerdings nur eine *denominatio a potiori* gebrauchen, durch welche eben deshalb der Begriff Wille eine größere Ausdehnung erhält, als er bisher hatte»[17](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn19).

What follows is a direct answer to Schopenhauer's critics: «daher aber würde in einem immerwährenden Mißverständniß befangen bleiben, wer nicht fähig wäre, die hier geforderte Erweiterung des Begriffs zu vollziehen»[18](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn20). In this context mentioning the will is not referring to the human will, but to its inner essence which we can distinguish and purify via the process of thinking[19](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn21). But it does not mean that «es sei zuletzt einerlei, ob man jenes Wesen an sich aller Erscheinung durch das Wort Wille, oder durch irgend ein anderes bezeichnete. Diese würde der Fall seyn, wenn jenes Ding an sich etwas wäre, auf dessen Existenz wir bloß *schlössen* und es so allein mittelbar und bloß *in abstracto* erkennten. … Nun aber bezeichnet das *Wort Wille*, welches uns, wie ein Zauberwort, das innerste Wesen jedes Dinges in der Natur afuschließen soll, … ein durchaus unmittelbar Erkanntes und so sehr Bekanntes, daß wir, was Wille sei, viel besser wissen und verstehen, als sonst irgend etwas, was immer es auch sei»[20](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn22).

Fundamental aspects of the definition of the world as will are the immediate knowledge of the will as essence of our own body and the conceptualization of this immediate knowledge. According to § 9 of Schopenhauer's main work, concepts offer knowledge which is abstract, discursive, universal (not individuated in time and space) and consequently «nicht durchgängig bestimmt»[21](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn23). This is a very important definition, because it makes clear the semantic and syntactic nature of Schopenhauer's expression "thing-in-itself". Nothing is predicable of the thing-in-itself as absolute. On the contrary we can qualify the *concept* of the thing-in-itself, because it enters in the discursive world. According to the principle of sufficient reason a concept is explained when it is considered «in ihrer Beziehung auf eine andere Vorstellung, welche ihr Erkenntnißgrund ist», and when the conceptual chain leads to an empirical representation. What is the difference between concept, i.e. the rational knowledge, and other forms of knowledge? «Daher hat die Klasse der abstrakten Vorstellungen von den andern das Unterscheidende, daß in diesen der Satz vom Grund immer nur eine Beziehung auf eine andere Vorstellung der *nämlichen* Klasse fordert, bei den abstrakten Vorstellungen aber zuletzt eine Beziehung auf eine Vorstellung aus einer *andern* Klasse»[22](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn24).

It seems that recent commentators lose sight of the conceptual nature, «not completely definite», of will as thing-in-itself. Their analysis is only literal. They do not consider the characteristic of rational discourse in Schopenhauer: the unceasing passages from one class of representations to another. They consider the very expression "the thing-in-itself is will" questionable. But it is comprehensible, if analysed as part of a discourse developed according to the principle of sufficient reason. Now the concept of the will as thing-in-itself is grounded on the immediate knowledge of our own body as will. This is the reason why it is «das einzige uns wirklich unmittelbar und ganz und gar Bekannte»[23](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn25).

Schopenhauer's arguments do not imply the existence of a third ontological or gnoseological perspective of reality beyond representation and will. Schopenhauer's arguments do not imply a distinction between absolute thing-in-itself and thing-in-itself in appearance. The unique distinction envisaged by Schopenhauer is the one between the world's essence considered in itself (absolute, without qualifications, excluded from any rational discourse) and the world's essence conceptualized, grounded on the immediate experience of body as will.

It is the latter which becomes object of Schopenhauer's words and arguments. Only this latter can be part of a discourse, because all discursive form is part of the world as representation according to the principle of sufficient reason: «es ist die Vernunft, die zur Vernunft spricht, sich in ihrem Gebiete hält»[24](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn26). Schopenhauer's ambition is to communicate the truth concerning the world, being aware that only the concept of the essence is communicable and not the essence in itself. Schopenhauer's critics do not seem to understand that he does not transform a concept into an object. Will is not a hypostasis. Schopenhauer writes on will in a discursive and conceptual universe. This is the reason why he needs aid from rhetoric, in particular from metaphor. Conceptual discourse on will is, as Schopenhauer explains, an unceasing passage from one class of representations to another and his writings are an unceasing alternation of literal and non-literal expressions, in particular analogies and metaphors.

Neeley notes some aspects of this view. He describes Schopenhauer's use of metaphor as "incremental", capable to extend knowledge and to develop a discourse on the thing-in-itself without violating Kantian boundaries[25](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn27). It is an interesting suggestion with an intrinsic limit: it considers the thing-in-itself of Schopenhauer's discourse as being the hypostasis of a concept, and not simply a concept. Perhaps it is better to say that Schopenhauer's use of metaphor is explanatory: it helps comprehensibility and communication of the metaphysical truth[26](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn28).

Schopenhauer's language is programmatically articulated into many levels. The expression "the thing-in-itself" is not literal. It is the conceptual expression of a truth, which is otherwise indefinable and unutterable. But as a concept, it is «not a completely definite representation», and Schopenhauer is aware of what that means: «indem selbst die vollkommenste Philosophie stets noch ein unerklärtes Element enthalten wird, gleich einem unauflöslichen Niederschlag»[27](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn29).

[**5. THE FIRST “NAME” OF THE WILL**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n5)

Let us now come to the analysis of the genesis of the system. The doctrine of the will takes form in the manuscripts of 1814, but Schopenhauer had already elaborated a complete philosophy in previous years. That included central elements of the later *Willensmetaphysik*, which are the conception of genius and the doctrine of redemption. At its centre we find the later abandoned conception of the «better consciousness» (*beßres Bewußtsein*). This has been defined as the primitive «core of crystallisation» of Schopenhauer’s system[28](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn30).

Before writing *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, the young Schopenhauer delineates a cosmos that is articulated in two dimensions: one of the better consciousness and one of the time–space reality regulated by the rational empirical consciousness. The «world of appearance», which is immersed in the chaos dominated by error, is placed alongside the «supersensuous and extratemporal» «real world», as attested in us by the better consciousness[29](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn31).

Schopenhauer defines the better consciousness in the negative way in comparison with the empirical consciousness. The better consciousness is beyond space, time, and the individual; it does not grasp reality either according to the causal nexus or to the perspective of subject and object[30](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn32); it is beyond the distinction between practical and theoretical reason[31](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn33); it is a «peaceful and silent intuition»[32](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn34) that «does not think or know»[33](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn35); it directly attains to ideas[34](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn36) and therefore to the most intimate essence of what appears[35](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn37); its relationship with the empirical consciousness is an insoluble and transcendental question[36](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn38). The two kinds of consciousness are united by a «mysterious bond»[37](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn39) and separated by a «boundary without width, by a *mathematical line*»[38](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn40).

The most pregnant and most significant definition of the better consciousness is given at its first mention in 1812. Schopenhauer writes that it lies «jenseits aller Erfahrung also aller Vernunft», but at the same time it is the most intimate and essential item we can find in ourselves. We «positively» cannot say anything about it, «denn unser Sagen liegt im Gebiet der Vernunft; wir können also nur sagen was auf diesem vorgeht». What happens here is that reason is disturbed in its standard activity: «als *theoretische* sehn wir sie verdrängt und an ihrer Stelle das *Genie*, als *praktische* [sehn wir sie] verdrängt und an ihrer Stelle die *Tugend*»[39](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn41).

The better consciousness expresses and explains thus the presence of the supersensuous in us: that is its role in Schopenhauer’s *Frühphilosophie*. In conceptual language we cannot say anything about the *Übersinnliche*, though it exists in us and we are intimately conscious of it as we see the genius or the saint in action. Their actions are realized in the world of experience, but they do not find any rational justification there. On the contrary, in order to be realized they require the removal of reason and its replacement: they require the activity of the better consciousness.

The better consciousness, this singular coinage of Fichtean and Schellingian origin[40](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn42), is the initial term Schopenhauer employs to express the «unvernunftliche Übersinnliche in uns». Any individual can find the supersensuous in himself; yet it is beyond all experience and all reason, and as such it transcends the conceptual dimension.

On the basis of this fundamental acquisition, Schopenhauer constructs his first *Weltanschauung*. This is firstly based on an immediate cognitive evidence: the better consciousness as being the supersensuous essence of the individual and of the world. Secondly, it is based on the conceptualisation – even though negative and partial - of this immediate knowledge. It is the same procedure that - after 1814 – is to bring to life the *Willensmetaphysik*. This is indeed a relevant fact, which throws light on the sense of Schopenhauer’s metaphysical instance and on the assumption of the will as thing-in-itself.

[**6. THE WILL AND THE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n6)

Early in 1814 Schopenhauer assesses the doctrine of better consciousness as being inadequate. Even the name "better consciousness" seems inadequate to him. He states that in fact we adopt the word “consciousness” «(indem kein andres da ist) um nicht nur das ganze Subjektseyn als Korrelat *aller* Klassen von Vorstellungen zu bezeichnen, sondern um sogar auch das *bessre Bewußtseyn* mit darunter zu bergreifen, welches gar kein Subjektseyn mehr ist»[41](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn43). The image of the better consciousness, which is ambiguous according to the framework of conceptual knowledge Schopenhauer wishes to get away from, is substituted by expressions like «Bessrer Genius»[42](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn44), «bester Mensch»[43](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn45), «bessere Natur»[44](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn46). In the end it fades away, while the will assumes an even clearer and more defined form as the unconscious root of the world.

The sense and the range of this reassessment have widely been discussed, especially within studies on the genesis of the system[45](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn47). However, this debate has neglected a fundamental element. It is not sufficient to go back to the better consciousness in order to understand the meaning of Schopenhauer’s proceeding. To understand what the will is and to ascertain the authentic beginning of the primitive *Systembildung*[46](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn48) it is necessary to focus not merely on a notion, but on a requirement of the young Schopenhauer. The original authentic instance that brought him to the elaboration of a philosophy is the doctrine of redemption.

This appears in all clarity in the manuscripts of his early years. As already observed, Schopenhauer considers the work of the genius and of the saint as evidence of the activity of the better consciousness in the world. After 1814 it is no more the better consciousness but the *noluntas* which explains the actions of both the saint and the genius. The procedure is the same. What is accomplished is not a simple removal of the bonds of our reason. It is something deeper and more essential: the negation of the temporal world[47](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn49). It is «die wahre Welterlösung»[48](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn50), thanks which the world vanishes «wie ein leichter Morgentraum, wie ein optisches Blendwerk»[49](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn51) and the human is no longer human: «um des Friedens Gottes Theilhaftig zu werden (d. i. zum Hervortreten des *bessern Bewußtseyns*) ist erfordert, daß der Mensch, dies hinfällige, endliche, nichtige Wesen, etwas ganz andres sey, gar nicht mehr Mensch, sondern als etwas ganz andres sich bewußt werde»[50](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn52).

The signification of the better consciousness is thus a signification of redemption: the better consciousness is the first, provisional figure that corresponds to a precise instance of redemption. For Schopenhauer this instance takes on a particular meaning: it is intended not as much as an *Erlösungsbedürfnis*, but as a requirement for understanding the concrete forms of redemption we experience in our life. The most astonishing element in Schopenhauer’s manuscripts, both before and after 1814, is that the pitiless reflections on radical evil do not lead to the question as to whether there is possibility of redemption for the human: the question is about *how* it is possible. Redemption exists, there is no doubt about this. For Schopenhauer this is attested by the actions of the artist and the saint, which are realized in experience although they cannot be reduced to the forms and the laws of experience itself. And it is precisely the ascertainment of this irreducibility that compels to redefine the limits of the world in which we exist and in which we understand our existence.

This requirement of redefining the world is  the authentic starting–point of Schopenhauer’s philosophizing.

In the following years the original requirement does not change, but the conceptual figures with which Schopenhauer attempts to give answers do change. They change when he has to recognise that they are inadequate. *Bewußtseyn* is inadequate, even in its purest and best form, to provide an account of our possibility of redemption. The will beyond consciousness is problematical, as it is a “borrowed” conception which is inevitably inappropriate and limited, and therefore – as we will see in the following paragraphs – it will be enriched with new significations in the course of time.

In this process, the better consciousness does not play the role of a simple “Platzhalter”, i.e. the role of a conceptual form which is still weak and only “keeps the place”, expecting more adequate conceptual paradigms, and which becomes superfluous when Schopenhauer individuates the thing-in-itself in the will[51](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn53). The better consciousness tells us something more determinate about the genesis and the signification of the will and about Schopenhauer’s philosophy as a whole. It shows that the root of both the will and the system is the thought of redemption.

The doctrine of redemption is not a sort of improbable by-product of the will. On the contrary, it is the will which is derived from the doctrine of redemption. From this perspective the aporia of the *Erlösung* also takes on new signification. It no longer appears as the weak and paradoxical result of the system: redemption is the condition prior to the elaboration of the system and, at a same time, its scope and its «letzter Gränzstein»[52](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn54), i.e. its furthest and unsurpassable limit[53](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn55).

[**7. THE ETHICAL AND METAPHYSICAL SIGNIFICATION OF THE WILL**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n7)

As the “thing-in-itself”, the will responds to two kinds of problems: the cognitive one, concerning the essence of the world, and the ethical one, concerning salvation. In the light of the genesis of the system it seems clear that for Schopenhauer these problems are intertwined and they remain so in the following years, as the three following quotations show:

Unter meinen Händen und vielmehr in meinem Geiste erwächst ein Werk, eine Philosophie, die Ethik und Metaphysik in *Einem* seyn soll, da man sie bisher trennte so fälschlich als den Menschen in Seele und Körper[54](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn56) (1813);

… mein Wille dagegen kommt durch seine Objektivation zur *Selbsterkenntniß*, durch die seine Aufhebung und Erlösung möglich wird. Daher auch bei mir allein die *Ethik* ein sicheres Fundament hat, und die Metaphysik des Schönes sich aufklärt, wie auch bei mir allein die Uebel in ihrer ganzen Größe eingestanden werden[55](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn57) (1828);

Bei mir die Welt nicht die ganze Möglichkeit alles Seyns ausfüllt, sondern in dieser noch viel Raum bleibt für Das, was wir nur negativ bezeichnen als die Verneinung des Willens zum Leben[56](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn58) (1844).

In the passage from the better consciousness to the will, Schopenhauer remains faithful to a philosophy that extends beyond the world of sensibility in order to reveal the essence and depict the way to salvation.

This double aspect of Schopenhauer’s research has not been considered adequately by the critics. They evaluate the willin its ontological aspect and do not take into consideration its redemptive significance. And even where they do so, they do not recognise that the will gushes forth from an inquiry on redemption. They analyse the will in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, where the doctrine of redemption is the point of arrival of the exposition. But the salvation, as shown above, is the starting–point of Schopenhauer’s research. It is the ascertainment that the genius and the saint do experience salvation, which stimulates Schopenhauer to question himself about the essence of the world. It is the observation that concrete forms of salvation are realised by the passage beyond the phenomenal world which leads Schopenhauer to his definition of the world’s essence. First the better consciousness and then the will come from a precise instance, that defines the empirical world as an appearance and tracks down its essence in the supersensitive world that is again not subjected to the principle of reason.

To hold that the will is the «essence of appearance» and that «nothing can be said philosophically» about the thing considered absolutely in itself, because we are dealing with a mystic conception that has significance only if it is connected with the doctrine of redemption (Atwell), means misunderstanding Schopenhauer’s metaphysics. To admit a distinction between the world as will («thing-in-itself in appearance») and the world as a thing which is in itself absolute and incomprehensible (Janaway and Young), means transforming Schopenhauer’s monism in a dualism. The next step is the discovery of transcendence (Lauxtermann and Cartwright) in Schopenhauer. But neither the thing-in-itself nor redemption are transcendent in Schopenhauer’s thought. The saint and his *noluntas* are in *this* world. The thing-in-itself is in *this* world. It is beyond representation, not beyond the world. If it were beyond the world it could not be the essence of the world, it ought to be the creative principle of the world, it ought to be God. But this would not be Schopenhauer’s philosophy anymore, as he clearly explains: «sagt ihr: das innre Wesen der Welt ist *Gott*, so habt ihr zum *Dinge an sich* etwas Objektives (was es auch seyn möge) gemacht; und Das ist notwendig falsch …: ein solches ist der *Wille*»[57](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn59).

Anglophone scholars rediscover – without being aware – the platonic–christianizing interpretation of Deussen. But the world as will and representation is not a reformulation of Plato’s dualism; it is the result of a critical and radical comparison with Kant’s and the postkantians’ monism, especially with Fichte and Schelling. Monism is a fixed point in Schopenhauer, because the experience of the saint and the genius shows that salvation belongs to this world. Redemption requires not transcendence but the possibility of looking at the world without being subjected to the principle of reason. This is certainly a mystic (not rational) experience, but it is an immanent experience. It is the (rational and immanent) philosophy of the will that explains how and why the mystic experience means redemption. This philosophy departs from Kant, in the first place with the doctrine of the better consciousness. This doctrine arises from a critique of Kant’s reason, whose purpose is not the refusal of criticism but its complete realization, i.e. the definition of the world in itself, purified of all interbreeding with the phenomenal world. It is this world beyond sensibility and illuminated by the better consciousness that explains both the mystery of the Kantian thing-in-itself and redemption. In a short time, however, Schopenhauer rejects the better consciousness: to him it still seems too “polluted” by a reality dominated by the principle of reason. The will appears in a form that makes the connection with Kant even more distinct: it is the thing-in-itself and brings the path trodden by Kant to its completion.

From this moment on the system takes on a stable configuration. The will becomes the foundation of a philosophy that leads to the doctrine of redemption. This philosophy is the synthesis of ethics and metaphysics which was already pursued in the doctrine of the better consciousness. Schopenhauer thinks he has found the answers he was looking for. Since he is convinced of the existence of redemption, he easily convinces himself of the efficacy of the will as an explicative instrument. By means of the mechanism of negation the metaphysics of the will illustrates how redemption realizes itself.

The discovery of the will, however, causes new doubts. Even the reviewers and the disciples contributed to cast doubts on the doctrine of the will. These doubts concern the definition of the will as «in itself» of the world. To understand them and Schopenhauer’s solutions we have to mind some historical aspects. Schopenhauer’s definition of the *Willensmetaphysik* arises together with his awareness of being part of an exceptional historical phase. Schopenhauer believes that such historical moment requires definite choices. In previous years Schopenhauer had criticised Kant in consonance with other thinkers as Schulze and Schelling. He had thought that criticism should be conducted more radically and attempted this with the better consciousness. His increasingly wider studies and, above all, the experience of Fichte’s lectures in Berlin, had convinced him that a certain way of criticising Kant brings about the destruction of the Kantian inheritance. In 1814 he decides that the moment has come to take up a position, to make philosophy in Kant’s footsteps against the postkantians who had abandoned him. The will as the thing-in-itself gives him the opportunity of establishing his position in the era of postkantian speculation.

[**8. TRUTH, ESSENCE AND THE KANTIAN LEGACY**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n8)

In the Kritik der Kantischen Philosophie, appendix to Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, Schopenhauer considers it definitive that the "world is will". He does not argue anymore. He has no doubts about the truth of his philosophy. He is much more concerned for his system and its place in history. He fears to be considered one of the philosophers who betrayed Kant's criticism: one of the philosophers who started a new dogmatic age of speculation. This is the reason why he discusses at long Kant's merits and errors. Schopenhauer explains that the distinction between thing-in-itself and phenomenon was Kant's greatest merit. His errors began in reflecting on the thing-in-itself: from the false demonstration of its existence to the wrong determination of its nature[58](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn60). In repeating many times these judgements, he is sending a message: thing-in-itself was Kant's essential concern and must be philosophy's fundamental problem. This is the reason why he presents himself as the unique philosopher faithful to Kant: because he has confronted the riddle of the thing-in-itself and because he has solved it within the limits defined by Kant:

Das Ding an sich habe ich nicht erschlichen noch erschlossen, nach Gesetzen die es ausschließen, indem sie schon seiner Erscheinung angehören; noch bin ich überhaupt auf Umwegen dazu gelangt: vielmehr habe ich es unmittelbar nachgewiesen[59](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn61).

The *Kritik der Kantischen Philosophie* is important in understanding how Schopenhauer sees himself in the history of postkantian philosophy. Insisting on Kant's merits and errors, Schopenhauer tries to demarcate good and bad philosophy. It is interesting to follow how he argues. In the first edition (1819), he says that Kant unduly adopted the principle of sufficient reason to deduce the thing-in-itself. He explains that it is a serious mistake, because we cannot apply the principle of reason to the thing-in-itself[60](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn62). In the second edition (1844) he argues differently, referring to *Aenesidemus* (1792) of Georg Ernst Schulze, his professor at Göttingen in 1810-11. Kant was wrong when he thought to deduce causally the thing-in-itself. It is not possible to infer the existence of the thing-in-itself from the phenomenon, affirming that the latter is an effect of the former. Causality is *a priori* function of the understanding, building up the phenomenal reality and intrinsic to the world as representation. We cannot use causality to connect phenomenons to the thing-in-itself[61](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn63).

A question, then, arises: why does Schopenhauer mention Schulze only in the second edition? He surely knew Schulze's argument in 1810s, but he did not refer to it. A long note composed around 1830 offers an explanation. Schopenhauer examines the effects of Schulze's critics on the postkantian philosophy. He notices that the following philosophers have misinterpreted Schulze's argument. They have not considered it as a critic of Kant's deduction of the thing-in-itself, but as the ultimate denial of the existence of the thing-in-itself. This misunderstanding has been the root of the idealists' nonsense[62](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn64). They have completely dismissed philosophy's real scope: discovery of what the world is, disclosure of the world's essence. This is the reason why Schopenhauer writes:

Ich halte die Akten über Kants Ding an sich noch nicht für geschlossen, wenigstens fühle ich mich gedrungen Folgendes darüber deizubringen, als Versuch Kants Lehre vom Ding an sich zu retten[63](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn65).

Schopenhauer argues long that we cannot give up Kant's doctrine of the thing-in-itself, even if a false element is to be found in its exposition. His aim is to reformulate correctly Kant's demonstration, in order to find out that the thing-in-itself is «uns wirklich *gegeben*», that «wir zwar vom Daseyn der Dinge an sich gewiß sind, aber nichts darüber hinaus wissen, bloß *daß* sie sind, nicht *was* sie sind»[64](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn66). Schopenhauer concludes that «im Ganzen also hat man auf Schultzens allerdings scharfsinnige Argumente zu viel gegeben: sie treffen mehr die mangelhafte Darstellung Kants als seine Meinung»[65](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn67).

The explicit reference to Schulze serves to clarify Schopenhauer's relationship to Kant. In 1819, Schopenhauer does not need make explicit Schulze's role. He considers himself as part of a philosophical tradition – the postkantian philosophy. He considers himself the most prominent among the postkantian philosophers because he has completed Kant's doctrine of the thing-in-itself. Things change in the following years, when his unsuccessful book finds no readers and its reviewers do not understand its novelty and its value. Schopenhauer feels his isolation and reacts interpreting his isolation as meaningful. Schopenhauer describes himself as Kant's unique heir, because he is the unique philosopher capable to understand the spirit of Kant's philosophy and the true meaning of Schulze's criticism. In 1844 this has become an important argument. Schulze and whoever used Schulze's argument to dismiss the searching about the essence of phenomenons betrayed the true spirit of Kant's philosophy. The authentic Kant's followers say:

Wir wollen die Bedeutung jener Vorstellung wissen: wir fragen, ob diese Welt nichts weiter, als Vorstellung sei[66](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn68).

A real Kantian is the philosopher who completes critical thinking with ontological enquiries, because the philosopher’s duty is to reveal and to communicate the essence of the world.

[**9. NOUMENA AND IDEAS**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n9)

In order to understand the will, it is fundamental to understand how Schopenhauer evaluates his place in postkantian philosophy and his relation to Kant. According to Schopenhauer, Kantian philosophy is a milestone because it joins criticism and the pursuit of a philosophical discourse on the nature of the world. Postkantian idealists on the contrary do not understand Kant, because they deny the existence of the thing-in-itself. They have severed their bond with Kant and have abdicated from their duty, because they have renounced to the search of the world’s truth. In many occasions Schopenhauer declares that the authentic Kantian philosopher is the one who inquiries the world and the nature of the thing-in-itself:

Nun unterscheidet den ächten Philosophen vom unächten dies: daß jenem die Perplexität über die Welt entstanden ist, diesem über irgend ein vorliegendes System. So ist z. B. Fichte blos über Kants Ding an sich zum Philosophen geworden, das er gern weg schiben gewollt hat; es ist denn auch eine Philosophie danach geworden, eine Wissenschaftsleere[67](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn69);

Denn wenn eigentlich alle bisherigen Philosophen lehrten *woher* die Welt und *wozu* sie sei; so werden wir uns nicht so weit *extra oleas* versteigen, sondern bloß betrachten *was* sie sei[68](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn70);

Dahin gehört aber alle Philosophie, die statt die Welt selbst zu erforschen, statt zu fragen Was die Welt sei; nach dem Grunde der Welt forscht und frägt Wie sie geworden oder wozu sie dasei: welche Fragen … zwar von allen Dingen *in* der Welt gültig sind, aber auf das ganze der Welt übertragen, keine Bedeutung mehr haben[69](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn71).

In the period devoted to study philosophy and to prepare *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Schopenhauer develops the conviction of being the unique postkantian thinker who really follows Kant. And in the second edition he explicitly writes: «jedenfalls erkenne ich nicht an, daß zwischen ihm und mir irgend etwas in derselben [philosophy] geschehen sei; daher ich unmittelbar an ihn anknüpfe»[70](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn72).

Schopenhauer’s point of view is clear: philosophy must search the thing-in-itself. Is this really a Kantian thesis? Or is it a misunderstanding of Kant’s doctrine? Once again the answer comes out not only from the textual analysis. We need to evaluate the theoretical ties between Schopenhauer and the philosophical tradition, with particular attention to Plato.

According to Schopenhauer, Kant’s critical philosophy is the completion of Plato’s metaphysics. The two doctrines tell the same truth. Plato understood that the true reality is the world of ideas behind nature; Kant renewed Plato’s doctrine of ideas with the notion of noumenon: «das Kantische Ding an sich nichts andres als die Platonische Idee ist»[71](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn73). In this sense, Schopenhauer argues, Kant's noumenon is an object. Like Plato's ideas, noumena are not conditioned by the forms of the individualization principle (space, time and causality). They are submitted to «die erste und allgemeinste Form aller Erscheinung, … die der Vorstellung überhaupt, des Objektseyns für ein Subjekt»[72](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn74).

Schopenhauer's point is not simply historical. Schopenhauer wants to give evidence of the primacy of his own philosophy. He declares that at the origin of the debates and the perversions of the postkantian philosophy is Kant's definition of the thing-in-itself as object. As Kant says that behind phenomena there are noumena: he gives a transcendental explanation «*in abstracto*, durch die Kritik der reinen Vernunft»[73](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn75). This is correct, if noumena are objects, like Plato's ideas. Then noumena are knowable, because an object is for a subject: «die Dinge sind nur unsre Vorstellungen, ihr Seyn bedeutet Vorstellbarkeit für das Subjekt, d. i. für uns: an uns selbst ist Objekt alles was erkennbar ist, und das ist auch nur in sofern als es erkennbar ist[74](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn76)». But Kant falls in his «fundamental error» in explaining that noumena are things in themselves. Thus the thing-in-itself becomes an object. Schopenhauer protests this idea: the thing-in-itself is the essence of the world; it is not an object but the principle of all objects. To clarify Kant's doctrine, says Schopenhauer, we must distinguish noumena (which are knowable objects) from the thing-in-itself (which is not an object and is unknowable). Interpreting Kant's noumena like Plato's ideas make it easy to understand the real nature of noumena and to eliminate the confusion between noumena and the thing-in-itself.

[**10. WILL AND PHILOSOPHY**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n10)

Let's summarize Schopenhauer's arguments. Kant discovered an essential truth: the existence of a reality in itself exists behind phenomena. He correctly defined this reality as being unknowable. But he erroneously described it as an object, Plato's idea, and named it "noumenon". In his own opinion Schopenhauer completes and ameliorates Kant's philosophy identifying the thing-in-itself with the will and explaining the world as being objectity of the will. We now understand the reason why Schopenhauer did not use the term "noumenon" but adopted Kant's terminology of the thing-in-itself. Schopenhauer's thing-in-itself rectifies Kant's confusion between noumenon and essence. If we admit that Schopenhauer «would have been much better off if he had eschewed at least much of Kant's terminology, including "the thing-in-itself"», we do not understand Schopenhauer's arguments nor the reason why he proclaimed himself the unique authentic heir of criticism. Even worse we misunderstand both the metaphysical commitment of his doctrine and the discovery of the essence of the world[75](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn77).

If the will were not essentially connected to Kant's problem of the thing-in-itself Schopenhauer would not have dwelled on his respect of Kant's limits for metaphysics. He would not have dwelled on the betrayal of the postkantian philosophers, who abandoned the search for the thing-in-itself and thus repudiated Kant and the philosophy itself. He would not have dwelled on Kant's merits and errors. He proclaims himself as the continuer of Kant and explains his new method to catch the thing-in-itself: «zum Wesen an sich dieser können wir nur auf dem ganz anderartigen, von mir eingeschlagenen Wege, mittelst Hinzuziehung des Selbstbewußtseyn, welches den Willen als das Ansich unserer eigenen Erscheinung kund giebt, gelangen»[76](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn78). In order to be a disciple of Kant, Schopenhauer explains, one must understand deeply his philosophy, eliminate its errors and discover the nature of the thing-in-itself.

These same arguments are discussed in the *Vorlesungen* elaborated in 1820, when Schopenhauer began his activity as *Privatdozent* in Berlin. The discovery of the will as thing-in-itself comes through an immediate cognitive act. It is «eine Erkenntniß ganz eigener Art»: «sie ist die Beziehung eines Urtheils auf das Verhältniß, welches eine anschauliche Vorstellung, der Leib, zu dem hat, was gar nicht *Vorstellung* ist, sondern ein von dieser *toto genere* Verschiedenes, *Wille*. Ich möchte daher diese Wahrheit vor allen andern auszeichnen und sie *κατ' εξοχηνphilosophische Wahrheit* nennen»[77](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn79).

Schopenhauer is certain about many things: he has discovered the essence of the world; he has perfected Kant's work without having betrayed it; he is alone in respecting Kant's spirit and he is Kant's unique heir. Schopenhauer is aware of the differences between his and Kant's position: «ich habe nämlich gefunden, daß unsre Erkenntniß von der Welt nicht durchaus beschränkt ist auf die bloße Erscheinung, sondern wir allerdings *data* haben zur Erkenntniß des innern Wesens der Welt, desjenigen davon sie die Erscheinung ist, ihres innern Wesens und Kerns, also, da die Natur bloße Erscheinung ist, desjenigen was jenseit der Natur liegt, des innern Wesens, das Ansich der Natur»[78](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn80). But he sees his ideas as a completion of Kant's thought: «ich lasse daher Kants Satz stehn, daß das Ding an sich nicht erkennbar ist, modifizire ihn jedoch dahin, daß es nicht *schlechthin* erkennbar ist»[79](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn81). He can conclude: «daher bin ich berechtigt zu sagen, das innre Wesen in jedem Dinge ist *Wille*, oder *Wille* ist das Ding an sich»[80](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn82).

In spite of his interpreters' opinion Schopenhauer is not lacking in good arguments when debating the question of the will. He discusses it within a complex frame, which includes Kant and the destiny of his thought in Idealism, the place of philosophy and its redemptive role. «Philosophie ist eigentlich das Bestreben, durch die Vorstellung hindurch Das zu erkennen, was *nicht* Vorstellung ist und doch auch in uns selbst zu finden seyn muß, sonst wir bloße Vorstellung wären»[81](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn83). If we want to analyze Schopenhauer's concept of will we must seriously take into account this definition of philosophy. Some scholars on the contrary consider the will and its predicates as linguistic expressions whose evaluation exclusively depends on the contradiction principle. No philosopher – maybe no human discourse in the natural language - can safely escape such an analysis.

[**11. "THE MOST PERFECT OF PHENOMENA"**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n11)

Schopenhauer is aware of the difficulties concerning his doctrine of will. He knows that the thing-in-itself can have no determinations and qualifications. He expressly clarifies: by the will «führe ich die ganze Welt der Erscheinungen zurück auf eine einzige, in welcher das Ding an sich am unmittelbarsten hervortritt, obgleich wir auch hier, im strengsten Sinn, doch immer nur noch eine Erscheinung vor uns haben»[82](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn84). As shown above, this mention of the will as *Erscheinung* does not contradict the many expressions on the will as thing-in-itself. But it could be interpreted as being evidence in favour of the "thing-in-itself in appearance": a sort of relativization of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Instead of a metaphysics of the essence the so interpreted will could ground a phenomenology of the world in its totality. Some pages from the second volume of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1844) seem to give support to this interpretation. They speak of the will as the "key" to the "deciphering of the world" and of the philosophy as "nichts Anderes, als das richtige, universelle Verständniß der Erfahrung selbst, die wahre Auslegung ihres Sinnes und Gehaltes»[83](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn85).

The metaphor of the "key for deciphering" is really impressive and  gives strong support to the interpretation of the will as "thing-in-itself in appearance". The fact that the will as "key for deciphering" the world is not present in the first edition (1819) of Schopenhauer's work but only in the second (1844) is even more interesting. It appears that in the lapse of twenty five years Schopenhauer has changed his thought about the will: in 1844 the will is no more the absolute thing-in-itself.

Our interpretation is different. We consider that picture defective because it forgets some relevant aspects of Schopenhauer’s ideas. It forgets, for example, that even though the "key for deciphering" appears in 1844, Schopenhauer had known it many years before and had already used it in his *Early Manuscripts*[84](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn86). He had discovered this typical Romantic image around 1806-1807 in the writings of some Romantic authors as Wilhelm Henrich Wackenroder and Zacharias Werner. These essayists and writers described the language of art as "key for deciphering" the ultimate and unspeakable essence of the world. They related the concept of “deciphering” to the mystical aspects of experience, those aspects capable to bring the person to salvation[85](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn87). This is Schopenhauer’s intellectual source. He tried to rationalize within a philosophical system the fact of the human redemption, not to relativize it.

What is new in the concept of "key for deciphering" does not change the meaning of the will but enriches it. We have to keep in mind that the expression "the will is the thing-in-itself" is a concept. And a concept, in Schopenhauer's thought, is never «completely definite». That means that the determinations of a concept can be refined. Thus we admit that in the course of years Schopenhauer refines more and more the most important concept of his philosophy. This refinement is necessary, because the concept of will has a double nature: it carries the philosophical truth and, being a concept, limits the communication of the philosophical truth. According to Schopenhauer this connotation as "limit" gives a Kantian meaning to the concept of will: «ueberall ist der Wille, als das Metaphysische, der Gränzstein jeder Betrachtung, über den sie nirgends hinauskann»[86](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn88).

The 1844 determinations of the will enrich Schopenhauer's metaphysics but do not alter it. Speaking of the will as the "key for deciphering" the world, Schopenhauer describes the metaphysics as immanent: «sie bleibt daher immanent und wird nicht transscendent. Denn sie reißt sich von der Erfahrung nie ganz los, sondern bleibt die bloße Deutung und Auslegung derselben, da sie vom Dinge an sich nie anders, als in seiner Beziehung zur Erscheinung redet»[87](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn89). A famous letter to Frauenstädt explains: «dieser Wille ist Ding an sich bloß in Bezug auf die *Erscheinung*», that means: «das Ding an sich haben Sie stets nur in der *Erscheinung* zu suchen» otherwise it is transcendent[88](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn90). Is all this really different from the definitions of will and metaphysics in § 22 of the 1819 edition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vostellung*? Already in 1819 the will is the «most perfect» of all phenomena and the metaphysics is immanent. It is not strange: this is, according to Schopenhauer, the Kantian heritage. Schopenhauer's will and metaphysics respect the Kantian limits both in 1819 and 1844. The term *Gränzstein*, which clearly evokes Kant, is the same in defining the will in 1844 and in summarizing the results of the doctrine of will and redemption in 1819: «wir aber, die wir ganz und gar auf dem Standpunkt der Philosophie stehen bleiben, müssen uns hier mit der negativen Erkenntniß begnügen, zufrieden den letzten Gränzstein der positiven erreicht zu haben»[89](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn91).

What has changed between 1819 and 1844 is not the definition of the will nor the relationship to Kant. What has changed is the target of Schopenhauer's criticism and polemics. In 1819 he struggles against the philosophers of the postkantian tradition, who have deserted the search for the essence of the world. In the following years he becomes more interested in the destiny of his system. He sees that his book remains unsold and that the few critical reviews do not understand his metaphysics of will and redemption[90](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn92). He becomes more and more worried when some interpreters understand his doctrine as a piece of transcendent metaphysics[91](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn93). He notices that the will is interpreted as a substance in the sense of the prekantian philosophy. He realizes that his doctrine of will is judged as unfaithful to Kant, as it would be a pretension of the rationality to conjugate immanence and transcendence. For this reason in 1844 he draws attention to the concept of metaphysics as being a system of the experience and to the definition of will as key of deciphering. In this way he can strengthen his loyalty to Kant and confirm of not having sustained the deification of reason like the postkantian philosophers. His 1844 definition of metaphysics states it explicitly: «wenigstens ist dies der Sinn, in welchem ich, mit durchgängiger Berücksichtigung der von Kant nachgewiesenen Schranken der menschlichen Erkenntniß, das Problem der Metaphysik zu lösen versucht habe: daher lasse ich seine Prolegomena zu jeder Metaphysik auch für die meinige gelten und bestehen»; «hieran liegt es, daß vom Daseyn, Wesen und Ursprung der Welt ein vollständiges, bis auf den letzten Grund gehendes und jeder Anforderung genügendes Verständniß unmöglich ist. So viel von den Gränzen meiner und aller Philosophie»[92](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn94).

[**12. CONCLUDING REMARKS**](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#tocfrom1n12)

What is will? We have tried to show that an answer to this single question is superficial and misunderstands Schopenhauer’s metaphysics. The question concerning the will involves many other aspects of Schopenhauer’s thought: we must consider them, in order to clarify what the will is.

1) When Schopenhauer says “the will is the thing-in-itself” he expresses a philosophical truth through a concept. As such it is “not completely definite”. This does not imply a form of agnosticism regarding the thing-in-itself nor the relativization (neither ontological nor gnoseological) of the thing-in-itself. Admitting two senses of thing-in-itself is wrong if it brings into play two entities (the absolute and the relative thing-in-itself) in Schopenhauer’s metaphysics. There is one essence (which is neither a substance nor a transcendent entity) and the will reveals it within and according to the limits of the conceptual language.

2) Taking for granted that the will is the foundation of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics could limit our comprehension. We should ask how Schopenhauer discovers the will. Manuscripts show that Schopenhauer’s original concern is about redemption and its occurrence in this world as the highest and most significant experience that a human being can have in his existence. Since it is an experience which is not admitted by natural laws, there must be something within the human being which can break the necessity of natural laws. Schopenhauer discovers this “something” first in the *better consciousness* and later in the *noluntas*. He abandons the *better consciousness* because he considers it inadequate and still too “polluted” by the experience dominated by the principle of reason. The will is the conclusion of a theoretical journey which passes through the doctrine of the *better consciousness*. The will is the arrival point and not the starting point of Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Manuscripts show that the will comes out of the doctrine of redemption and turns the perspective of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* – where it seems that the will grounds the doctrine of redemption - upside down.

3) In order to understand how Schopenhauer transforms his doctrine of will we have to consider the philosophical context and not only some verbal modifications in his works. Before 1819 Schopenhauer sees himself as a postkantian philosopher who solves the problem of the thing-in-itself. After 1819 he repudiates the postkantian tradition and presents himself as the unique Kantian philosopher after Kant. The determinations of the will in 1819 and in 1844 fulfil requirements of different sorts, but do not abandon Schopenhauer's original conception. Schopenhauer’s concept of will as the thing-in-itself explains the way to salvation as something which is grounded inside everyone of us: “nur das Subjektive ist ein Umittelbares, d.h. unmittelbar Gekanntes, kann daher als Erklärungsgrund alle Mittelbaren dienen: ein solches ist der *Wille*”[93](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn95) (1846).

4) Through the will, which is “the most perfect of phenomena”, Schopenhauer unveils the essence of the world, offers an immanent system of philosophy and explains the most important human experience: salvation. The will expresses the truth of a metaphysics which is grounded on the doctrine of redemption. It is a Kantian metaphysics within the boundaries established by Kant’s *Prolegomena*. As such it is immanent. There is nothing transcendent in Schopenhauer’s thought: “nach meiner Philosophie, deren großer Vorzug die völlige *Immanenz* (im Gegensatz der Transcendenz) … ist; - nach meiner Philosophie ist die Erscheinung der Bejahung des Willens zum Leben, die ihren Gegensatz an der Verneinung desselben hat, deren Eintritt die Welt aufhebt”[94](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn96). His metaphysics communicates the discovery of the immanent essence of the world in accordance with Kant’s teaching about the boundaries of knowledge: “*meine Philosophie* ist, innerhalb der Schranken der menschlichen Erkenntniß überhaupt, die wirkliche Lösung des Räthsels der Welt. In diesem Sinne kann sie eine *Offenbarung* heißen. Inspirirt ist solche vom Geiste der *Wahrheit*”[95](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#ftn97).

**NOTES**

[1](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn3)  Arthur Hübscher, *The philosophy of Schopenhauer in its intellectual context. Thinker against the tide*, Lampeter, Mellen, 1989, chapter 11, pp. 380-383. See GBr, pp. 287-290 (letter dated 6 August 1852).

[2](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn4)  Steven Neeley, "The knowledge and nature of Schopenhauer's will", *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, 77, 1996, pp. 85-112; see p. 111.

[3](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn5)  Cfr. Julian Young, *Willing and Unwilling: A Study in the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer*, Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 1987, pp. 31-32.

[4](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn6)  John Atwell, *Schopenhauer on the character of the world: the metaphysics of will*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, pp. 126-127.

[5](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn7)  Christopher Janaway, *Will and Nature*, in Janaway (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 138-171; see pp. 163-166. See WII, chapter 17

[6](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn8)  Paul F. H. Lauxtermann, *Schopenhauer’s broken world-view. Colours and ethics between Kant and Goethe*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2000, pp. 222-225.

[7](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn9)  David E. Cartwright, "Two senses of “thing-in-itself” in Schopenhauer’s philosophy", *Idealistic Studies*, 31, N. 1, 2001, pp. 31-54: see pp. 44-46 and 32.

[8](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn10)  Instead commentators remember the paradox of brain which is phenomenon of itself, originally pointed out by Eduard Zeller, *Geschichte der deutschen Philosophie seit Leibniz*, München, Oldenburg, 1873, p. 885: the brain is at the same time subject (organ of representation) and object in phenomenical world. Cartwright cites also some English translations of Eduard von Hartmann, Simmel and Nietzsche.

[9](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn11)  It is easy to collect the many titles in languages other than English: it is sufficient to look at Hübscher’s (*Schopenhauer-Bibliographie*, Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1981) and Aul’s (*Schopenhauer-Bibliographie*, Egelsbach, Hänsel-Hohenhausen, 1996) bibliographies or at the annual bibliography in the volumes of the *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*.

[10](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn12)  Richard A. Watson, "Shadow History in Philosophy", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, XXXI, N.1, 1993, pp. 95-109: see pp. 96-97.

[11](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn13)  Atwell, *Schopenhauer on the character of the world* cit., p. 119. Janaway, *Will and Nature* cit., p. 165. Lauxtermann, *Schopenhauer’s broken world-view* cit., p. 226. Cartwright, "Two senses of “thing-in-itself” in Schopenhauer’s philosophy", cit., p. 45

[12](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn14)  Franz Mockrauer, “Über Schopenhauers Erstlingsmanuskripte”, *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, 4, 1915, pp. 135-167.

[13](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn15)  WI, pp. 119/100, 120/100, 125/105: «it is given in intelligent perception as representation, as an object among objects, liable to the laws of these objects. But it is also given in quite a different way, namely as what is known immediately to everyone, and is denoted by the word *will*»; «so on the other hand, if we set aside their existence as the subject's representation, what still remains over must be, according to its inner nature, the same as what in ourselves we call *will*»

[14](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn16)  WI, p. 121/101-102.: «I know my will not as a whole, not as a unity, not completely according to its nature, but only in its individual acts, and hence in time, which is the form of my body's appearing, as it is of every body. Therefore, the body is the condition of knowledge of my will».

[15](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn17)  WI, p. 130/109: «Wem nun, durch alle diese Betrachtungen, auch *in abstracto*, mithin deutlich und sicher, die Erkenntiniß geworden ist, welche *in concreto* Jeder unmittelbar, d.h. als Gefühl besitzt, daß nämlich das Wesen an sich seiner eigenen Erscheinung, … sein Wille ist».

[16](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn18)  WI, p. 131/110: «it is only this application of reflection which no longer lets us stop at the phenomenon, but leads us on to the *thing in itself*».

[17](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn19)  WI, pp. 131-132/110-111: «we must borrow its name and concept from an object, from something in some way objectively given, and therefore from one of its phenomena. … This can be none other than the most complete of all phenomena, i.e. the most distinct, the most developed, the most directly enlightened by knowledge; but this is precisely man’s *will*. We have to observe, however, that here of course we use only a *denominatio a potiori*, by which the concept of will therefore receives a greater extension than it has hitherto had».

[18](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn20)  WI, p. 132/111: «but anyone who is incapable of carrying out the required extension of the concept will remain involved in a permanent misunderstanding».

[19](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn21) *Ibid*.: «das uns unmittelbar bekannte innerste Wesen eben dieser Erscheinung müssen wir nun in Gedanken rein aussondern».

[20](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn22)  WI, pp. 132-133/111: «I should misunderstood by anyone who thought that ultimately it was all the same whether we expressed this essence-in-itself of all phenomena by the world will or by any other word. This would be the case if this thing-in-itself were something whose existence we merely *inferred*, and thus knew only indirectly and merely in the abstract. … But the world *will*, which, like a magic word, is to reveal to us the innermost essence of everything in nature … something known absolutely and immediately, and that so well that we know and  understand what will is better than everything else, be what it may».

[21](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn23)  WI, pp. 47/39-40 and 50/42: «not a completely definite representation»

[22](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn24)  WI, pp. 48-49/40-41: «in its relation to another representation that is its ground of knowledge»; «therefore the class of abstract representations is distinguished from the others, for in the latter the principle of sufficient reason always requires only a relation to another representation of the *same* class, but in the case of abstract representations it requires in  the end a relation to a representation from *another* class».

[23](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn25)  WI, p. 133/112: «the one thing really known to us immediately and completely».

[24](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn26)  WI, p. 47/40: «it is reason speaking to reason that keeps within its province».

[25](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn27)  Steven Neeley, "Schopenhauer and the limits of language", *Idealistic Studies*, 27, 1-2, 1997, pp. 47-68 (cfr. pp. 59-60).

[26](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn28)  I discussed in detail this argument, with particular attention to the scientific metaphor, in Marco Segala, “La metafora scientifica in Schopenhauer”, in *Segni e percorsi della modernità. Saggi in onore di Paolo Rossi*, ed. by Ferdinando Abbri and Marco Segala, Arezzo, Dipartimento di Studi Storico-Sociali e Filosofici, Università degli Studi di Siena, 2000, pp. 123-156.

[27](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn29)  WII, p. 664/579: «even the most perfect philosophy will always contain an unexplained element, like an insoluble precipitate».

[28](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn30)  Hans Zint, "Schopenhauers Philosophie des doppelten Bewußtsein", *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, 10, 1921, pp. 3-45, here p. 6 (also in: Hans Zint, *Schopenhauer als Erlebnis*, München/Basel, Reinhardt, 1954, pp. 15-48). On the better consciousness see among the more recent references: Edoardo Mirri, *Un concetto perduto nella sistematica schopenhaueriana: la «migliore coscienza»*, in *Schopenhauer e il sacro*, Atti del Seminario tenuto a Trento il 26-28 aprile 1984, ed. by G. Penzo, Bologna, EDB, 1987, 59-82 (also in *Filosofia della natura e pensiero religioso*, Napoli, ESI, 1985, pp. 11-49); Yasuo Kamata, *Der junge Schopenhauer. Genese des Grundgedankens der Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Freiburg-München, Alber, 1988; Rüdiger Safranski, "Hoch auf dem Berge und – entronnen! Schopenhauers besseres Bewußtsein: Ekstase des Sehers", *Lutherische Monatshefte*, 28, 1989, pp. 267-71; Rüdiger Safranski, *Zur Entwicklung der Philosophie Schopenhauers*, in *A. Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer als Anfrage an das Christentum*, hrsg. v. der Katholischen Akademie Hamburg, Hamburg, 1989, pp. 9-36; Friedhelm Decher, "Das "bessre Bewußtsein": Zur Funktion eines Begriff in der Genese der Schopenhauerschen Philosophie", *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, 77, 1996, pp. 65-83; François-Xavier Chenet, *Conscience empirique et conscience meilleure chez le jeune Schopenhauer*, "Les Cahiers de l’Herne", Paris, n. 69, 1997 pp. 103-130.

[29](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn31)  HNI, p.14/14: § 20; p. 20/20: § 32; p. 42/44: § 81.

[30](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn32)  HNI, p. 42/44: § 81.

[31](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn33)  HNI, p. 23/23: § 35.

[32](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn34)  HNI, p. 158/173: § 261.

[33](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn35)  HNI, p. 67/72: § 96.

[34](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn36)  HNI, pp. 47-48/51: § 86; p. 76/83: § 119.

[35](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn37)  HNI, p. 30/31 (note): § 54.

[36](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn38)  HNI, p. 67/72: § 96.

[37](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn39)  HNI, p. 68/74: § 99.

[38](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn40)  HNI, p. 111/120: § 204.

[39](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn41)  HNI, p. 23/23: § 35: «this consciousness lies beyond all experience and thus beyond all reason»; «if he wants to be *better consciousness*, then we positively cannot say anything more about him, for what we say lies in the province of reason. Therefore we can only say what happens in this sphere, and in this way we speak only negatively of the better consciousness. Thus *reason* then undergoes a disturbance; as *theoretical* reason we see it supplanted and in its place *genius*, as *practical* we see it supplanted and in its place *virtue*». See also HNI, p. 48/51: § 86 and p. 103/112, § 187.

[40](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn42)  The origins of the better consciousness from the intellectual intuition of Schelling and from the notion of the "höheres Bewußtsein" Fichte uses in his Berlin lectures in 1811/12 are evident from the *Nachlaß*. Nowadays they constitute an already acknowledged datum in the literature (see for example Kamata, *op. cit.*, pp. 121 e 205; Decher, *op. cit.*, p. 66 and Chenet, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-107).

[41](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn43)  HNI, p. 152/165: § 253: «we need this work (there being no other) not only to denote the whole of being–subject as the correlative of *all* classes of representations, but even to include under it the *better consciousness* as well, which is no longer a being–subject at all».

[42](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn44)  HNI, p. 179/195: § 290.

[43](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn45)  HNI, p. 179/196: § 291.

[44](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn46)  HNI, p. 198/217: § 319. The expression «besserer Geist» can also be found in the fourth book of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (WI, p. 461/390).

[45](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn47)  Beyond the already classical studies of Theodor Lorenz, *Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Metaphysik Schopenhauers. Mit Benutzung des handschriftliches Nachlaß*, Leipzig 1897; Otto Weiß, *Zur Genesis der Schopenhauerschen Metaphysik*, Leipzig, 1907; Franz Mockrauer, *op. cit.*; Wilhelm Schröder, *Beiträge zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Philosophie Schopenhauers. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung einiger wichtiger frühnachkantischer Philosophen (Maimon, Beck, G.E.Schulze, Bouterwek und Jacobi)*, Rostock, 1911; Karl Gjellerup, "Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Schopenhauerschen Philosophie. Eine Studie über den elften Band der neuen Gesamtausgabe der Werke Schopenhauers («Genesis des Systems»)", *Annalen der Philosophie* 1, Leipzig 1919, pp. 495-517; see the more recent contributions of Yasuo Kamata, *Der junge Schopenhauer*, cit.; Rudolf Malter, *Der eine Gedanke. Hinführung zur Philosophie Arthur Schopenhauers*, Darmstadt 1988; Thomas Bohinc, *Die Entfesselung des Intellekts. Eine Untersuchung über die Möglichkeit der Ansicherkenntnis in der Philsophie Arthur Schopenhauers unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Nachlasses und entwicklungsgeschichtlicher Aspekte*, Frankfurt a.M. – Bern - New York - Paris 1989; Rüdiger Safranski, *Zur Entwicklung der Philosophie Schopenhauers*, cit.

[46](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn48)  H. Zint, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

[47](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn49)  HNI, pp.45/48 ff.: § 86.

[48](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn50)  HNI, p. 44/47: § 85: «the true salvation of the world».

[49](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn51)  HNI, p. 136/148: § 234: «with the appearance of the better consciousness that entire world vanishes like a light morning dream or optical illusion».

[50](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn52)  HNI, p. 104/113: § 189: «For sharing in *the peace of God* (in other words for the appearance of *the better consciousness*) it is necessary that man, this frail, finite and transitory being, be something quite different, that he become aware of himself no longer as a human being at all, but as something quite different».

[51](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn53)  F. Decher, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

[52](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn54)  WI, p. 486/410: «final landmark».

[53](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn55) This kind of analysis confirms from a genetic point of view Rudolf Malter's interpretation, which is still debated, about the redemptive significance of Schopenhauer’s philosophy: cfr. Malter, *A.Schopenhauer. Transzendental Philosophie und Metaphysik des Willens*, Stuttgart - Bad Cannstatt 1991. The historical and philological justification of the theses presented here is being given in my work on the genesis of Schopenhauer’s thought: N. De Cian, *Redenzione, colpa, salvezza. All’origine della filosofia di Schopenhauer*, Trento, Verifiche (forthcoming).

[54](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn56) HNI, p. 55/72: § 92 «A work is growing in my hand, or better: in my mind; a philosophy that must be ethical and metaphysical in a unity, whereas up to now it has erroneously divided itself as though the human were erroneously divided in mind and body».

[55](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn57)  HNIII, p. 463/506: Adversaria, § 66: «My will, on the other hand, arrives at *self-knowledge* through its objectivation and through such knowledge its abolition and salvation become possible. Therefore with me alone does *ethics* have a sure foundation, and the metaphysics of the beautiful is cleared up, as also with me alone are the evils frankly admitted in all their magnitude».

[56](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn58)  WII, p. 740/644: «that with me the world does not fill the entire possibility of all being, but that in this world there is still left much room for we describe only negatively as the denial of the will-to-live».

[57](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn59)  HNIV(1), p. 295/332: Spicilegia, § 135: «if you say that the inner essence of the world is *God*, then you have made something objective (whatever it might be) into the *thing-in-itself*. And this is necessarily false … such a thing is the *will*».

[58](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn60)  WI, pp. 494-505/417-426.

[59](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn61)  WI, p. 597/503: «I have not introduced the thing-in-itself surreptitiously or inferred it according to lawns that exclude it, since they already belong to its phenomenon; moreover, in general I have not arrived at it by roundabout ways. On the contrary, I have demonstrated it directly».

[60](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn62) *Sämtliche Werke*, hrsg. von Arthur Hübscher, dritte Aufl., Wiesbaden, Brockhaus, 1972, 7. Band, pp. 105-108.

[61](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn63)  WI, pp. 516-517/435-436. About Schulze's role in Schopenhauer's critics to Kant see Günther Baum, "Arthur Schopenhauers Kritik der Kantischen Philosophie", *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, 69, 1988, pp. 387-98.

[62](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn64)  HNIII, pp. 657-658/713-714:  Adversaria, § 302.

[63](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn65)  HNIII, p. 655/711: Adversaria, § 302: «I do not yet regard as closed the dossier on *Kant's thing in itself*; at any rate I feel called upon to adduce the following remarks on the subject in an attempt to preserve Kant's doctrine of the thing in itself».

[64](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn66)  HNIII, p. 656/715: Adversaria, § 302: «consequently it is actually *given* to us», «we are of course certain of the existence of the thing-in-themselves, but know nothing beyond this; we know merely *that* they are, not *what* they are».

[65](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn67)  HNIII, p. 660/716: Adversaria, § 302: «On the whole too much importance has been attached to Schulze's doubtless ingenious arguments which are concerned more with Kant's imperfect presentation than with his meaning».

[66](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn68)  WI, p. 118/98: «we want to know the significance of those representations; we ask whether this world is nothing more than representation».

[67](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn69)  HNI, p. 74/81: § 112 (1813): «what distinguishes the genuine philosopher from the ungenuine is that for the former there has arisen a perplexity concerning the world, for the latter a perplexity concerning some existing system. Thus, for example, Fichte became a philosopher merely over Kant's thing in itself, which he would have liked to push on one side; after that it too became a philosophy, a doctrine of emptiness». The English edition translates erroneously "eine Wissenschaftsleere" as "a doctrine of science".

[68](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn70)  HNI, p. 387/427: § 572: "For if all previous philosophers have taught *whence* the world has come and *for what purpose* it exists, we shall not venture to climb so high *extra oleas*, but shall consider merely *what* it is".

[69](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn71)  VorI, p. 497.

[70](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn72)  WI, p. 493/416: «In any case, I cannot see that anything has been done in philosophy between him and me; I therefore take my departure direct from him».

[71](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn73)  HNI, p. 132/143: § 228: «Kant's thing in itself is nothing but the Platonic Idea». This argument is also in WI, § 31.

[72](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn74)  WI, p. 206/175: «the first and most universal form, namely that of the representation in general, that of being object for a subject».

[73](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn75)  WI, p. 204/173: «*in abstracto* through the *Critique of Pure Reason*».

[74](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn76)  HNI, p. 130/141: § 223: «things are only our representations and their being means their ability to be represented for the subject, i.e. for us. In ourselves the object is all that is knowable and this also is only to the extent that is knowable»

[75](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn77)  HNIII, p. 184/202: Brieftasche, § 112: «Philosophie ist eigentlich das Bestreben, durch die Vorstellung hindurch Das zu erkennen, was *nicht* Vorstellung ist». WII, p. 197/177: «die *Metaphysik* über die Erscheinung selbst hinausstrebt, zum Erscheinenden».

[76](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn78)  WI, pp. 516-517/436: «we can arrive at its being-in-itself only on the entirely different path I have followed, by means of the addition of self-consciousness, which proclaims the will as the in-self of our own phenomenon».

[77](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn79)  VorII, p. 77.

[78](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn80)  VorII, pp. 59.

[79](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn81)  VorII, p. 102.

[80](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn82)  HNIII, p. 36/40: Reisebuch, § 98: «I am therefore justified in saying that the inner essence in each thing is *will* or *will* is the thing in itself».

[81](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn83)  HNII, p. 184/202: Brieftasche, § 112: «Philosophy is really the attempt to know throughout the representation that which is *not* representation and yet must also be discoverable in ourselves, otherwise we should be mere representation».

[82](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn84)  VorII, p. 102.

[83](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn85)  WII, chap. 50, p. 738/642 and chap. 17, pp. 202-204/182-184: «philosophy is nothing but the correct and universal understanding of experience itself, the true interpretation of its meaning and content».

[84](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn86)  HNI, p. 30/31: § 54 (Fußnote): «die Anschauung aber faßt das innerste Wesen, die *Platonische Idee*, auf, die Bedeutung der Hieroglyphen der unendlich mannigfaltigen Erscheinung».

[85](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn87)  See Arthur Hübscher, *The philosophy of Schopenhauer* cit., chapter 2, pp. 43-45: «art, however, makes use of the language of hieroglyphs, whose signs we know and understand from their outward appearance» (p. 45).

[86](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn88)  WII, p. 409/359: «the will, as the metaphysical, is everywhere the boundary-stone of every investigation, beyond which this cannot go anywhere».

[87](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn89)  WII, p. 203/183: «metaphysics thus remains immanent, and does not become transcendent; for it never tears itself entirely from experience, but remains the mere interpretation and explanation thereof, as it never speaks of the thing-in-itself otherwise than in its relation to the phenomenon».

[88](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn90)  GBr, p. 288: letter of 6 August 1852.

[89](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn91)  WI, pp. 485-486/410: «we, however, who consistently occupy the standpoint of philosophy, must be satisfied here with negative knowledge, content to have reached the final landmark of the positive». A reader of the English translation cannot appreciate the recurrence of *Gränzstein*: on page 359 it is «the boundary-stone», on page 410 it becomes «the final landmark».

[90](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn92)  The six reviews of *Die Welt als Wille und Vostellung* were edited by Reinhard Piper, "Die Zeitgenössischen Rezensionen der Werke Arthur Schopenhauers", *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauers Gesellschaft*, 5, 1916, pp. 161-192; 6, 1917, pp. 47-178.

[91](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn93)  Schopenhauer was indignated by those scholars who described his system of philosophy as transcendent. He struggled a fierce battle against them until his last years, as some letters show: GBr, pp. 267-268 (10 October 1851), pp. 405-406 (12 November 1856), pp. 460-461 (10 November 1859). Also Schopenhauer's last letter (September 1860) is partly dedicated to that subject: «ich meinerseits habe mich vor aller Transscendenz gehütet und immer nur von Dem geredet, was sich in der Erfahrung nachweisen läßt» (GBr, p. 483). A new critical reading of Schopenhauer's last letter, together with its first complete edition, is by Alfred Estermann, "“Omisi hoc rescribere”. Die Geschichte des letzten Schopenhauer-Briefs", *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, 77, 1996, pp. 21-49.

[92](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn94)  WII, pp. 203-204/183 and pp. 738-739/642: «this, at any rate, is the sense in which I have attempted to solve the problem of metaphysics, taking into general consideration the limits of human knowledge which have been demonstrated by Kant. Therefore I approve and accept his *Prolegomena* to every metaphysical system as valid for mine also»; «this is why a perfect understanding of the existence, inner nature, and origin of the world, extending to the ultimate ground and meeting every requirement, is impossible. So much as regards the limits of my philosophy and of all philosophy».

[93](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn95)  HNIV(1), p. 295/332: Spicilegia, § 135: “only the subjective is something immediate, in other words immediately known, and can therefore serve as the basis for explaining everything mediate. Such a thing is the *will*”.

[94](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn96)  HNIV(1), p. 252/286: Spicilegia, § 32: “The good point of my philosophy is its complete *immanence* (in contrast to transcendence)… . According to this philosophy, the world is the appearance of the affirmation of the will-to-live; the opposite of this is the denial of the will, and the setting-in of this abolishes the world”

[95](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn97)  HNIV(2), p. 8/366: Senilia, § 21: “Within the limitations of human knowledge in general, *my philosophy* is the real solution to the riddle of the world. In this sense it can be called a *revelation* and such is inspired by the spirit of *truth*”.

**Notes de bas de page ast´risques:**

[\*](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn1)  Citations from Hübscher’s editions of Schopenhauer’s works (dritte Auflage), manuscripts and letters. English citations from Payne’s translations of Schopenhauer’s works (1966) and manuscripts. References to the pages: German edition/English translation.

[\*](http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=577242#bodyftn2) \* This paper comes out from discussions and mutual comments of the authors, who wrote together the paragraph 12. Nicoletta De Cian wrote the paragraphs 5-6-7, Marco Segala the paragraphs 1-2-3-4 and 8-9-10-11.