

### Schopenhauer's Understanding of Schelling

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The Oxford Handbook of Schopenhauer

Edited by Robert L. Wicks

Print Publication Date: Apr 2020

Subject: Philosophy, History of Western Philosophy (Post-Classical)

Online Publication Date: May 2020 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190660055.013.4

### Abstract and Keywords

Schopenhauer is famously abusive toward his philosophical contemporary and rival, Friedrich William Joseph von Schelling. This chapter examines the motivations for Schopenhauer's immoderate attitude and the substance behind the insults. It looks carefully at both the nature of the insults and substantive critical objections Schopenhauer had to Schelling's philosophy, both to Schelling's metaphysical description of the thing-in-itself and Schelling's epistemic mechanism of intellectual intuition. It concludes that Schopenhauer's substantive criticism is reasonable and that Schopenhauer does in fact avoid Schelling's errors: still, the vehemence of the abuse is best perhaps explained by the proximity of their philosophies, not the distance. Indeed, both are developing metaphysics of will with full and conflicted awareness of the Kantian epistemic strictures against metaphysics. In view of this, Schopenhauer is particularly concerned to mark his own project as legitimate by highlighting the manner in which he avoids Schelling's errors.

Keywords: Schopenhauer, Schelling, Kant, intellectual intuition, metaphysics, will, insults

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Schopenhauer's philosophical brilliance and famous stylistic virtuosity is matched by his equally famous and frequent displays of petty, personal name-calling and mud-slinging. No one vexed him more than the German Idealists: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and none were more frequent targets of his spiteful diatribes. Indeed, Brian Magee writes: "In intensity and amount, this highly personal abuse of named contemporaries or near-contemporaries has no equal in the history of philosophy."<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer calls them sophists, windbags, charlatans, frauds, dishonest peddlers of nonsense, delirium, and crazy twaddle; he accuses them of being careerists using philosophy as simply a means of advancing professional status, using obscurantist, mystifying language. Their words are "senseless," he writes (SW5, 508 [PP2, 508]). They are injurious to students, whom they lead astray by "vandalizing the legacy of Kant";<sup>2</sup> they are guilty of perversity, "driveling," and plagiarism. In Volume 1 of *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Schopenhauer refuses to include any of the three in his lengthy essay on the history of philosophy—and goes out of

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his way, in an appendix, to ensure that the reader has noticed the omission (SW5, 22f [PP2, 23f]).

Of his three Idealist adversaries, Schopenhauer was most ambivalent about Schelling. He often dismissed Fichte in a fairly perfunctory way, while Hegel was the object of a pure and self-assured hatred, lacking any nuance. Schopenhauer's relationship to Schelling, by contrast, was more complicated: in *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, for instance, Hegel is "thoroughly contemptible"<sup>3</sup> while Schelling is merely an "impudent, cocky gasbag" (SW1, 11-12 [FR, 16]).

In his published works, Schopenhauer intersperses cautious and occasional praise for Schelling in his typical invective, calling him, in PP1, "definitely the most talented among (p. 50) the three [Idealists]" (SW5, 26 [PP1, 25]), and even declaring, in Volume 2 of *Parerga and Paralipomena*, "... where Schelling stands on Kant's shoulders he says much that is good and worth remembering" (SW6, 118 [PP2, 102]). In the same discussion, he concedes some of Schelling's scientific insights to be valuable.

In this chapter, we look at some features of this ambivalent relationship: the nature of Schopenhauer's engagement with Schelling and some possible motivations for its occasional virulence. We argue that the ambiguous attitude Schopenhauer entertains toward Schelling can be explained by Schopenhauer's awkward consciousness of how much his project genuinely resembled that of Schelling. At the same time, if we take seriously the virulence of his self-distancing from Schelling (and the pejorative terms in which he often describes his evil twin), we can illuminate some of the distinctiveness of Schopenhauer's metaphysics.

### 3.1 Anxiety of Influence

Recent scholarship has called some much-deserved attention to the contemporaneity of Schopenhauer and Schelling.<sup>4</sup> To their contemporaries, Schelling was an obvious point of reference for Schopenhauer. Indeed, almost all of the first reviews of *The World as Will and Representation* note the similarities between the systems, a comparison that infuriated Schopenhauer. The first two published reviews of WWR1 indicated widespread points of sympathy between Schopenhauer's thought and that of Schelling.<sup>5</sup> The second review expressed particular surprise at Schopenhauer's hostility to Schelling, as its (anonymous) author claimed that Schopenhauer's main ideas were simply a rehashing of themes in Schelling. A further review, by the prominent philosopher, Johann Friedrich Herbart, noted Schopenhauer's proximity to Schelling in one respect; namely, that Schopenhauer is susceptible to the same criticism he made of Schelling, that of falling into transcendent metaphysical speculation rather than remaining within the bounds of knowledge established by Kant.<sup>6</sup> Yet another reviewer was struck simply by how "unbefitting a scholar" Schopenhauer's insulting language concerning Schelling really was.<sup>7</sup>

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Schopenhauer was particularly irritated by the suggestion that his central philosophical insight was anticipated by Schelling, who in his middle-period works (roughly 1809–1813) developed a metaphysics of will as supersensuous ground of reality and wrote in his 1809 essay, *Philosophical Investigations into The Essence of Human Freedom*, that “Willing is primal being.”<sup>8</sup> We know from Schopenhauer's notes that he had read this text particularly carefully in the years prior to the publication of Volume 1 of *The World as World in Representation* in 1818. In PP1, he has three points of rebuttal to the claim that Schelling anticipated his philosophy with this insight into the primacy of will, each of which is worth consideration.

Schopenhauer's first strategy is to deny that there is any direct lineage from Schelling's thought to his own—but that both were influenced jointly by Kant—and so any apparent similarities can be accounted for in this way.

(p. 51)

The root of my philosophy already lies in the Kantian philosophy, especially in the doctrine of empirical and intelligible character ... [and] as soon as Kant throws more light on the thing in itself, it looks out through its veil as will ... [and consequently] my philosophy is only the thinking-through-to-the-end of his. Thus we should not be surprised when traces of the same fundamental thought can be found in the philosophemes of Fichte and Schelling, which also start out from Kant, although there they occur without consistency, connection, and completion, and are thus to be seen as a mere foreshadowing of my doctrine. (SW5, 142 [PP1, 122])

He then develops a surprisingly long and colorful list of images to illustrate this notion of foreshadowing and motivate his claim that, although Schelling's ideas anticipated those of Schopenhauer, Schopenhauer has a prior right to them.

In general it needs to be said about this point that of every great thought, before it has been discovered, an anticipation makes itself known, a presentiment, a faint image, as in a fog, and a futile attempt to grasp it. ... However only that person is the author of a truth who has recognized it from its ground. ... However, that at one time or another ... it has been uttered half-consciously and almost as if speaking in one's sleep ... means not much more than if it were written in just so many letters, even if it is written in just so many words—in the same way that the finder of a thing is only that person who, in recognizing its value, picked it up and kept it, but not the one who accidentally took it in his hand and dropped it again; or, in the way that Columbus is the discoverer of America, but not the first shipwrecked person washed up there by the waves. (SW5, 142–3 [PP1, 122])

Finally, Schopenhauer enumerates a series of older writers who privileged will over intellect as evidence that the idea was not original to Schelling either—that Schelling was not even the first shipwrecked sailor upon this particular shore (SW5, 143 [PP1, 122]). (In his marginal notes to the *Freedom* essay, Schopenhauer accuses Schelling of being derivative

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but of another source: the whole essay is “almost only a recasting of Jacob Boehme’s *Mysterium magnum*, in which practically every sentence and every expression can be identified” [MR2, 354]).

Schopenhauer’s argument is curious here, and it shares something of the logic of Freud’s famous joke about the cracked kettle: “I am original and neither was Schelling.” For one thing, the Columbus metaphor is unconvincing—a polished work of philosophy is a poor candidate for the sort of semi-conscious stammering of an idea that would be a candidate point of comparison to the shipwrecked person. But more importantly, the two-way relationship between the shipwrecked party and Columbus doesn’t extend very easily to the three-way relations among Kant, Schopenhauer, and Schelling. Schopenhauer appears to be arguing that he is original with respect to Schelling at being unoriginal with respect to Kant. Kant, in the terms of this odd metaphor, would have to be the country, not the voyager; the source of truth, not the seeker after it.

The conclusion Schopenhauer wants his readers to draw is clear even if his arguments are not: Schelling is not the true proprietor of the good ideas that occasionally appear in (p. 52) his writings. That honor goes, variously, to Kant, Schopenhauer himself, and Jakob Boehme. But this conclusion is of a piece with the distinctive set of insults that Schopenhauer persistently uses in describing Schelling’s philosophical project. Looking carefully, we can see that Schopenhauer’s insults are not simply poisoned darts but in fact cohere on a specific critical judgment: Schelling himself has nothing to say. His thoughts (when they truly are his own, as opposed to his many incompetent borrowings) are empty, meaningless, full of air, a faint or perverse echo of a truth, lacking sense and substance.

But poisonous as these darts certainly are, we might speculate that their affective intensity is the result of another form of the anxiety of influence. Not only does Schopenhauer worry that his philosophy is not as original as he clearly wants it to be—he often takes pride in telling historical stories that insert him into the canon of philosophical greats while omitting his contemporaries—but he may also be worried that he is doing *just what he is criticizing Schelling for doing*, a classic case of Freudian projection. Specifically, he may be worried that his attacks on Schelling’s use of intellectual intuition as a means of doing metaphysics might also apply to his own metaphysics: both, after all, appear to seek to go beyond experience to the thing in itself. To see this, we need to get beyond the insults and look more closely at the substantive content of Schopenhauer’s complaints against Schelling: first, his critique of Schelling’s metaphysics and second, his critique of Schelling’s epistemology.

## 3.2 The Substance of the Critique: Metaphysics

Schopenhauer had a number of substantial criticisms of Schelling’s philosophy, but most of them are centered on the notion that Schelling transgressed the epistemological boundaries established by Kant and illicitly applied representational forms to areas beyond the jurisdiction of the principle of sufficient reason, and specifically to the thing in

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itself. In his marginal notes to Schelling's philosophy, Schopenhauer records this response to a reading of Schelling's 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*:

It is one of the craziest excesses of the human mind that, after Kant's appearance, it has been possible for it to presume to demonstrate according to laws of spatiality and to others valid for experience that which is said to be the supersensuous ground of all consciousness, for which experience is first possible. (MR2, 384–85)

In similar vein, Schopenhauer writes this about the (1809) *Freedom* essay:

Everything comes down to the fact that, underlying man's phenomenal appearance in time, there is something outside all time as well as outside all the conditions of the (p. 53) phenomenon. If we try to adapt these conditions to the otherwise correct concept of that something, then we get *monstra*. (MR2, 353)

The most mendacious aspect of that claim, in Schopenhauer's opinion, was the idea of a discrete intellectual faculty that bypassed the understanding, the faculty of intellectual intuition. Schopenhauer regards intellectual intuition as a sort of cheap circus trick, secret evidence on behalf of the cause, an unverifiable, unteachable special sense. "Here is the breastwork behind which Fichte and Schelling hide from all arguments; they assert that they see something apart which no one sees except them and their mob" (MR2, 381). We will address the problem of intellectual intuition at greater length momentarily, but Schopenhauer's great proof against it was that he detected in the reported results of such an intuitive grasp of metaphysical truths a mere reproduction of the structures of phenomenal knowledge, or even, as we shall see, something worse: "That their observations [taken from intellectual intuition] of the transcendental ego's way of acting are false is seen from their describing that way of acting as occurring according to the laws of the empirical ego" (MR2, 381).

Accordingly, Schelling's supposed descriptions of metaphysical reality are simply a warmed-over duplication of empirical reality. In contrast to his own method (to which we will soon turn), Schopenhauer accuses Schelling of "secretly abstracting metaphysics ahead of time from the empirical sciences and then ... finding a priori what it had learned a posteriori." (SW4, 2 [WN, 323]).<sup>9</sup> Schopenhauer applies a form of this same criticism to Schelling's ethical reasoning which, Schopenhauer argues, betrays a misunderstanding of the relation between the transcendent and the empirical registers. While acknowledging the independence of the human essence from temporality, Schelling nevertheless attributes change to it: he "speaks of punishment that is a consequence of the soul's deed, of its future state and so on. In short, he presents the entire world as an event in accordance with finite laws, an event that flows out of an action of God and has a final purpose" (MR2, 376).

Schopenhauer's criticism of Schelling's earlier Identity philosophy hangs on the specific accusation that Schelling has imported the subject-object distinction, which is a feature (the defining feature) of representational consciousness, into the transcendent realm of the thing in itself. Schelling's philosophical project involved deriving first the subjective

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world of consciousness and second the objective world of nature from a prior and grounding identity or Absolute. "The basis of our consciousness, its falling apart into subjective and objective, is 'explained' by that philosophy trying to refer it to laws according to which it must be so and not otherwise. But where do these come from? From the understanding!" (MR2, 378). Schelling offends both when he imports concepts of the understanding wholesale into the transcendent realm—such as the concepts of causation and, more generally, temporality and change, which are needed to grasp the derivation of the object from the subject and vice versa—and when he modifies concepts of understanding to indicate the distinctiveness of the metaphysical—such as when he entertains the thought of an absolute subject, an object-less subject, which Schopenhauer considers nonsense. The Identity philosophy does not provide Schelling the philosophical (p. 54) resources to develop and articulate an appropriate conception of the supersensible. Again, Schelling tries to resolve the problem with the magical solution of intellectual intuition (or rational intuition, as Schopenhauer sometimes calls it), to which Schopenhauer replies:

Very little is clear to me about this method, but enough to know that it proceeds according to the principle of sufficient reason in its various forms [i.e., it doesn't successfully transcend experience]. Since rational intuition has passed me by completely, I forgo the deep wisdom that such construction contains. ... Indeed, this is true to such an extent that—strange to say—whenever someone is teaching this deep wisdom, it is as if I can hear only the dronings of atrocious and extremely tedious windbags. (SW2, 31 [WWR1, 48])

Schopenhauer hints, moreover, that intellectual intuition is not just a projection of the empirical on the transcendental but also projects a specifically *religious* metaphysics, thus connecting his critique with Kant's. For instance, he describes Schelling's "Absolute" unity of subject and object as "reverend [*ehrwürdig*]" (2:30) and refers to the public record of Schelling's philosophy (as opposed to the private deliverances of his "intellectual intuition") as something accessible, by contrast, to "the laity [*uns Profanen*]" (2:31). We will return to this important point later.

In his middle-period system, with the *Freedom* essay, Schelling had abandoned the conception of an Absolute as subject-object identity for a metaphysical conception of primal will, which plays the role of God's material "ground." Schopenhauer has limited praise for this move: "Schelling himself later realized that metaphysical problems cannot be dismissed through peremptory assertions [and] he provided a real metaphysical attempt in his treatise on freedom." But Schopenhauer does not by any means think Schelling has overcome his methodological difficulties, describing the essay as "a mere fantasy, a tall tale" (SW5, 29 [PP1, 28]). In BM, Schopenhauer reports that the *Freedom* essay contains

... an extensive report on a god with whom the esteemed author betrays an intimate acquaintance, since he even describes his coming into existence; it is only to be regretted that he does not mention in a single word how he came to this acquaintance. (SW4, 84 [FW, 99])

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Although Schopenhauer's critical concerns are not without merit, they do not seem to warrant the level of invective he displays. The complaint that Schelling illicitly applied transcendental categories to transcendent experience can be equally urged against Kant, as Schopenhauer himself noted: he roundly condemns Kant for asserting that the thing in itself "affects" the subject with sensations, which are the raw material of cognition. This inference is based on the law of causality, whose proper sphere of operation is *within* experience, not *between* experience and the thing in itself (SW2, 516–17 [WWR1, 463]). And Kant was certainly also liable to the charge of smuggling theological (p. 55) pieties into metaphysics. So, this error on its own cannot explain the virulence of Schopenhauer's critique.

But, more significantly, it is not at all clear that Schopenhauer has resources any different from intellectual intuition for discovering and articulating what lies outside experience. In his notes, after rejecting Schelling's intellectual intuition Schopenhauer wrote, in the context of Kant's thing =  $x$  (i.e., thing in itself),

Instead of this [ $x$ ], the genuine, that is to say the critical, philosopher should do theoretically what the virtuous man does practically. Thus the latter does not make the desire attaching to him through his sensuous nature into an absolute desire, but follows the better will in him without associating it with that desire, as for example with a reward, and thus to want only relatively and not absolutely what is good. In just the same way, the genuine critical philosopher separates his better knowledge from the conditions of empirical knowledge and does not carry these over into the former knowledge (as does the sensuous man his sensuous pleasures into paradise because he himself does not like to enter this without them). He does not use these as a bridge to unite the two worlds (like the sensuous believer who uses reward as a bridge to virtue). On the contrary, he coldly and imper- turbably leaves behind the conditions of his empirical knowledge, content to have clearly separated the better knowledge from that other, and to have recognized the twofold nature of his being. (HN2, 328 [MR2, 376–77])

Schopenhauer clearly articulates a will to depart from the empirical into the metaphysical, but the mechanism for doing so—the "better knowledge" [*bessere Erkenntniß*]*—remains undefined. Schopenhauer largely abandoned the term "better knowledge" in his published writings, using other vocabulary to explore the question of epistemic access. But it remains as yet an open question how this is distinct from an intellectual intuition. We think that Schopenhauer need not be anxious on this account: he does in fact have a distinct method, and one that is not subject to the criticisms he makes of Schelling's use of intellectual intuition. It is to this notion of intellectual intuition that we now turn.*

### 3.3 The Substance of the Critique: Intellectual Intuition

Schopenhauer has a ready vocabulary of abuse against Schelling for his metaphysical speculations and his favored instrument of intellectual intuition. We have looked at Schopenhauer's justified philosophical concerns with Schelling's metaphysics, but we have not yet seen him provide a philosophically motivated critique of intellectual intuition. But if we are to see how his own method of epistemic access to the metaphysical truths avoids the problems of intellectual intuition, we need to do so now.

(p. 56) Schopenhauer's critique of Kant in BM is helpful in this regard. This critique is different from that offered in the long Appendix to WWR1. There, he focuses on theoretical issues, including the one discussed briefly earlier criticizing Kant's illicit projection of the concept of cause onto the thing in itself (SW2, 515–17 [WWR1, 462–64]). Here, by contrast, Schopenhauer is interested in practical issues, and he introduces his discussion with brief genealogy of the concept of intellectual intuition.

Schopenhauer explains that the idealist tradition derives the value it gives to intellectual intuition from Kant's categorical imperative, and specifically from the notorious "fact of reason [*Faktum der Vernunft*]." <sup>10</sup> In the extensive critique of Kant's ethics Schopenhauer offers in §6 of BM, he starts by making it clear that Kant should not be read (as the "fact of reason" obviously suggests) as arguing that morality has some empirical basis. In the first place, Schopenhauer focuses the rays of his attack precisely on the implausibility of a completely a priori account of morality, which would have to be based on "*pure concepts a priori*, i.e., concepts that as yet have no content," in other words, "mere shells without a core" (SW4, 130 [BM, 134]). (It is noteworthy that Schopenhauer repeats exactly this reproach of emptiness against Schelling.) At first, Schopenhauer's critique of Kant seems to be just as rhetorical as his blasts against Schelling: he goes on to wonder how "a couple of totally abstract, utterly substanceless concepts ... [could] have the power to bring bit and bridle to bear upon the stress [*Drang*] of desires, the storm of passion, the gigantic structure of egoism." "Now that is something we would like to see" (SW4, 130 [BM, 134]) he adds, sarcastically.

But a corollary of Kant's view gestures at a more significant difference: if the ground of morality really must be *a priori*, then it must be a principle of reason. And if reason itself is pure (i.e., unmixed with any empirical components), then it cannot be confined to merely human reason but extended to all rational beings, or even to a being that is nothing but reason: "This *pure* reason, then, is not taken as a cognitive power of *human beings*, which is all that it really is, but *hypostasized as something subsisting in itself*" (SW4, 131 [BM, 134]). Here Schopenhauer offers a proto-Nietzschean diagnostic <sup>11</sup>: Kant is tacitly appealing to theology ("dear little angels") and supposing that the "inner, eternal essence of the human being consists in *reason*" (SW4, 132 [BM, 135]). This is, of course, the precise opposite of Schopenhauer's view: that the in-itself of human being is will and that reason is decisively subordinate to the will (e.g., SW3, 233–36 [WWR2, 219–22]). Here, though, two



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things are important: (1) the implications of Schopenhauer's view not for the will, but for his conception of reason; and (2) the consequences of Kant's (or rather Kant's followers') mistaken "hypostasis" of reason.

Kant's followers forget Kant's own stringent claims that morality must be a priori and not empirical. Thus, the "categorical imperative increasingly appears as a hyperphysical fact" (SW4, 146 [BM, 148]), and thus the "fact of reason" is the genealogical forebear of the notion of intellectual intuition, as Schopenhauer conceives it. As Schopenhauer paints it: from Kant's modest (although mistaken) "fact of reason" there "sprang . . . doctrines of a reason that at first just faintly 'detected', then clearly 'perceived', and finally had full-bodied 'intellectual intuition of' the 'supersensible'" (SW4, 147 [BM, 148]).

(p. 57) This genealogy sheds considerable light on Schopenhauer's conception of intellectual intuition; it brings out the fact that Schopenhauer is concerned with the manner in which it is primarily *intellectual*, which is to say bound up with *reason*. Intellectual intuition is not just any ability to make contact with the thing in itself; it is specifically a *rational* faculty with the ability to grant cognition of the supersensible. The "fact" of Kant's "fact of reason" can make it look as if it has an empirical element. But this is a mistake, Schopenhauer argues, as can be seen by looking more carefully (the idealists did not do this) at Kant's own tough-minded rejection of an empirical or a posteriori element in morality: that is why the "fact" is in quotation marks, and Kant himself qualifies it as "strange."<sup>12</sup> The "factuality" of intellectual (rational) intuition is an illusion: all there is to it is a priori conceptual reasoning; but the concepts involved do not actually have any factual content; they are, as Schopenhauer repeatedly emphasizes, "empty."

There is another, more subtle, aspect to Schopenhauer's understanding of intellectual intuition. It is not just that intellectual intuition is a conception of reason that lays claim to hyperphysical cognitive access; it is also that Schopenhauer, in his model of intellectual intuition (and perhaps tacitly), treats the *content* of what it accesses as also essentially rational; there we find specifically the moral law (i.e., the law of practical reason), but generally (as the doctrine of intellectual or rational intuition expands) we find *noumena* (i.e., objects of thought, intelligible objects).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, if the noumenal aspect of something is its in-itself, then we, as phenomena with a noumenal aspect, are also in ourselves rational. This is one of the reasons why Schopenhauer only uses the term "thing in itself" and never noumenon; what we are in our cores is not reason, but will.<sup>14</sup>

Schopenhauer understands intellectual intuition as involving the pretense that our intellectual or rational faculties have unmediated access to things in themselves. Modesty about reason is very important to Schopenhauer.<sup>15</sup> There are several reasons why this is the case. Most importantly, reason is ultimately the "servant" of the will (SW3, 238 [WWR2,220]). Secondly, but still importantly, despite the importance he attaches to Kant, Schopenhauer is strongly influenced by the empiricist tradition, and especially the significance of perceptual knowledge, for which he adopts the Kantian term *Anschauung*, which is customarily translated into English as "intuition." Intuitions are, to a first approximation, spatio-temporal particulars, and, although the English term "intuition" is in

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some ways misleading, Schopenhauer does think that we grasp such particulars directly and that they have a vivid impact on us. But intuitions clearly go beyond mere perceptual particularity. First, Schopenhauer argues that causal relations are part of intuitive perception; by contrast, Kant thinks that causation is a conceptual determination. This leads Schopenhauer to claim that intuitive perception is as important as reasoning in science, in some ways more important: intuitive cognition “of cause and effect is indeed intrinsically deeper, more complete, and more exhaustive than an abstract thought of cause and effect” (SW2, 63 [WWR1, 78]). Second, it is intuitive perception and not reason that is the touchstone of Schopenhauer's thought: the two commanding heights of his philosophy, the theory of aesthetic experience and of morality, are both resolutely counter-conceptual in orientation. As Schopenhauer aphoristically (p. 58) expresses it: “Virtue is as little taught as genius: indeed, concepts are just as barren for it [virtue] as they are for art” (SW2, 319–20 [WWR1, 298]).

But the third and most salient motivation for Schopenhauer's modesty about reason is that concepts get their content from intuitive perceptions. Schopenhauer defines a concept as a “representation of a representation” (*Vorstellung einer Vorstellung* [SW2, 49; WWR1, 64]; *Vorstellungen aus Vorstellungen* [SW1, 98; FR, 94]). This definition is upwardly recursive (i.e., a concept can be used to represent a group of existing concepts) and so concepts are naturally arranged in a hierarchy; but it rests finally upon intuitive perceptions so that first-level concepts are representations of intuitive perceptions (SW2, 48–49 [WWR1, 63–64]). Thus, ultimately, concepts get their content or meaning from intuitive perceptions. In a familiar Kantian slogan, concepts without intuitions are empty; although, by contrast, Schopenhauer does not think that intuitions without concepts are blind, as does Kant. Indeed, one of his main critiques of Kant is that Kant fails to admit the possibility of intuitive knowledge.

Schopenhauer is particularly emphatic about his modest conception of reason because he thinks that the term “reason” also underwent a kind of genealogical shift in the work of Kant and the Idealists, and he is returning it to its original philosophical meaning. Prior to Kant, he argues in FR, the term meant more or less what he means by it; that is, abstract, conceptual knowledge and inference (SW1, 110 [FR, 105]). But Kant uses the term “understanding [*Verstand*]” to mean “conceptual cognition,” thus freeing up the term “reason” to designate something else. What is this something else? Well, at least in the hands of the post-Kantian idealists<sup>16</sup>:

They needed the place and name of *reason* for an invented, fabricated, or ... completely fictitious faculty that was supposed to rescue them from the perils in which *Kant* had put them, a faculty for immediate, metaphysical knowledge, i.e., one going beyond all possibility of experience, one grasping the world of things in themselves and its relations, hence a faculty that is above all a “consciousness of God”, i.e., one that knows the Lord God immediately ... a “faculty of the supersensible” ... designed immediately for *metaphysics* ... an immediate rational intuition of the absolute. (SW1, 111–12 [BM, 106–07])

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Why don't we have a faculty of intellectual intuition, according to Schopenhauer? Because "concepts ... must obtain their *material* and *content* from *intuitive* cognition" (SW1, 115 [BM, 109]). Intellectual intuition is therefore supposed to be a modification of reason that gives reason direct cognitive contact with things in themselves. But there is no such faculty because concepts have meaning only in relation to ultimately intuitive cognitive content. Without this, they are empty or meaningless.

Intellectual intuition therefore involves the reification of speculative pre-critical metaphysics; that is, the assumption of the existence of a special faculty for conceptual argumentation that transcends the possibility of experience. But because of Schopenhauer's rearrangement of transcendental idealism, he has no need for any a priori concepts, and hence subscribes to the empiricist doctrine of concept-empiricism (i.e., the claim that all concepts must trace back to intuitions).<sup>17</sup>

### (p. 59) 3.4 Meaningless Concepts

It is worth dwelling for a minute on the notion of empty and meaningless concepts. Strictly speaking, for Schopenhauer, there *are* no empty concepts. This follows from his definition of a concept as a representation of a representation: if there is no intuition for a (conceptual) representation to be a representation *of*, then there can be no conceptual representation.<sup>18</sup> Most philosophers prior to the linguistic turn did not consider language as methodologically significant or an object of interesting independent investigation: for Kant words more or less represent or are tokens for concepts, and analysis can be taken up at the level of concepts without loss. Schopenhauer, however, appears to use language in a philosophically significant way, to address the problem of abstraction in the empiricist tradition. The obvious way in which concepts can arise from intuitions is that a representative or canonical intuition is used to represent a type (i.e., as a concept). A representative intuition of a dog might stand for the concept DOG, for instance. But it is not obvious how we can distinguish between the intuition that is serving a conceptual role and a regular intuition without presupposing that we can already distinguish concepts from intuitions, in which case concepts must have their origin elsewhere than in intuitions. Schopenhauer's modern-sounding solution is that we use language.

[R]epresentations that are sublimated, and thereby decomposed into abstract concepts, have forfeited all their intuitive quality, they would completely escape consciousness and would thus have no value for the intended operations of thought if they were not fixed and held fast in our senses by arbitrary signs: these signs are words. Therefore insofar as they make up the contents of the lexicon, that is, of language, words always refer to *general* representations, concepts, never to intuitive things. (SW1, 99 [BM, 94–95])<sup>19</sup>

It does not seem to be too strong a reading of the passage to suggest that words are necessary for conceptuality: without words, we would have no epistemic access to concepts. While therefore (strictly) Schopenhauer thinks that there cannot be empty concepts, it does seem to be consistent with his view that there can be meaningless words, words pre-

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cisely for (nonexistent) concepts that purport to go beyond experience (i.e., beyond any intuitive content).

Schopenhauer's polemics against Schelling's notion of intellectual intuition are therefore quite motivated from a philosophical point of view: Schelling's use of intellectual intuition involves concepts that lack (even possible) intuitive content. Such concepts are literally meaningless, "empty verbiage" (SW3, 68 [WWR2, 70]) or "empty shells" (SW3, 92 [WWR2, 91]; SW2, XX [WWR1, 14]). It is this accusation that drives the content (if not the affect) of Schopenhauer's frequent accusation that Schelling is a "windbag" (SW2, 31 [WW1, 48]), for, if his words are empty, then they are equally just wind as they are "meaningless" marks (e.g., SW2, 40 [WWR1, 56], about Fichte). The critique of intellectual intuition also grounds Schopenhauer's account of boring books (SW3, 77–79 [WWR2, 77–80]), an accusation he often throws at the idealists (e.g., Fichte at SW2, 40 (p. 60) [WWR1, 56], and a priori philosophizing at SW5, 139 [PP1, 119]). This sounds like a simple insult, but in fact has a special technical application. Boring books are those that are based only on concepts rather than intuitions. And books based on concepts can do nothing other than elaborate the implicit content of those concepts explicitly, so they do not "introduce any really new cognition" (SW3, 78 [WWR2, 78], see also SW1, 103–04 [FR, 98–99]). Only intuition can do that.

Moreover, it is precisely this lack of anchoring content in Schelling's conceptuality that allows it to function as an effective screen on which to project his own fantasy content. But Schopenhauer does not think Schelling is projecting a *personal* content; rather, Schelling becomes a conduit for the projection of generalized cultural content (i.e., Christian dogma).

This, then, is the reason that Schopenhauer rejects intellectual intuition and abuses those who claim it for an epistemological tool. But we need to be cautious about the conclusions we can draw from this critique for Schopenhauer's own positive philosophy. For instance, we believe that Julian Young draws too sweeping a conclusion from the vehemence of Schopenhauer's critique in arguing that, in rejecting the idealists' faculty for metaphysical insight into the supersensible, Schopenhauer also rejected the project of metaphysics. Young argues that Schopenhauer's critique of the notion of intellectual intuition shows that the "traditional" reading of Schopenhauer must be incorrect. This traditional reading sees him "as basing his own metaphysics on direct encounters with the thing in itself; on what is in fact if not in name, intellectual intuition"<sup>20</sup>; but endorsing intellectual intuition would be a "betrayal of Kant" and his intellectual heritage.<sup>21</sup> Young is certainly right that Schopenhauer connects his attacks on his German Idealist "band of brothers" with his intellectual fealty to Kant. Indeed, the affective structures of Schopenhauer's reception of the idealists comprise in some ways the prototype of modern analytic philosophy's reception of the idealists. But Young interprets this as evidence in support of the view that Schopenhauer in fact *does* want to respect Kant's epistemic constraints and therefore that his claims that the thing in itself *is* will should be understood as falling short of a transcendent metaphysics.

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This interpretation, or set of interpretations, is common in the literature.<sup>22</sup> And Schopenhauer can reasonably be construed as conflicted on the matter. On the one hand, he clearly states that “the will is *thing in itself*” (SW2, 131 [WWR1, 135]). On the other, especially in WWR2, he appears equally clearly to deny this, arguing that the thing in itself only “*appears*, which is to say is cognized, as *will*” (SW3, 221 [WWR2, 209]).<sup>23</sup>

But, whichever is the case, Schopenhauer's critique of intellectual intuition is *not* a reason for thinking that Schopenhauer himself is not trying to develop a transcendent metaphysics in which the Kantian thing in itself is identified as will. The problem with intellectual intuition, as we have shown, is not that it promises the impossible—access to the transcendent—but rather that, *as a specific cognitive strategy*, it is misplaced. And this leaves the door open to the possibility that there are other, legitimate, cognitive strategies that *can* yield metaphysical knowledge, for there may be a species of *nonintellectual* intuition that constitutes or provides the bridge to the thing in itself. Schopenhauer may be denying the *intellectual* not the *intuition*. This view is indeed *prima facie* plausible (p. 61) because of Schopenhauer's critique of the role of the intellect in general, especially in comparison with his contemporaries.

To be sure, Schopenhauer never claimed we have an intuition of the thing in itself. When he introduces the “deduction” of the will as thing in itself in WWR1, he contrasts our external cognition of our bodies with the special “inner” cognition or awareness we have of our bodies as will. But he consistently uses the term “intuition” to refer to our external, representational cognition, for example:

The *will* makes itself known as the essence in itself of our own body, as that which it is *besides being an object of intuition*. (SW2, 126 [WW1, 130]; emphasis added)

And in WWR2 he clearly states that “cognition of the will in self-consciousness is ... not an *intuition* of the will” (SW3, 280 [WW2, 260]). In some ways, it is clear why Schopenhauer does this. He probably has in mind Kant's seamless view of experience, where inner experience (although structured only temporally) is not qualitatively distinct from outer experience (despite the fact that the latter is structured spatiotemporally): they both yield only knowledge of things—including ourselves—as *appearances*, not how they are in themselves. Such a seamless view of experience is probably the tacit presupposition governing the inference of those, like Young, who assume that Schopenhauer's rejection of intellectual intuition must entail a rejection of any transcendent metaphysics.

It is clear that Schopenhauer *wants* to break with Kant on this issue: he summarizes Kant's view (SW3, 219 [WWR2, 207]) and then immediately qualifies it by saying “I accept this for everything except the cognition everyone has of his own *willing*: this is neither an intuition (because all intuition is spatial), nor is it empty.” He clearly thinks we have *some* form of access to ourselves (or rather our bodies) as will in inner awareness. He sometimes terms this “cognition [*Erkenntnis*]” (e.g., SW2, 121 [WW1, 126]). He is pretty clear that, whatever it is, it is “direct” and not mediated. But the term “cognition” is obviously going to raise similar Kantian issues, and so he often equivocates, terming it a form of “consciousness [*Bewußtsein*]” (SW2, 123 [WWR1, 128]) or, in perhaps the best

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term he developed, a “wholly immediate awareness [*Innewerden*]” (SW3, 280 [WWR2, 260]). But he does not hesitate about at least one thing: the philosophical task involves “raising immediate consciousness, concrete cognition, to rational knowledge or transferring it to abstract cognition” (SW2, 122 [WWR1, 127]) In other words, whatever the *sui generis* inner awareness of ourselves (bodies) as will *is*, it is functionally equivalent to an intuition in that it plays the same content-determining role as intuitions do in relation to concepts.

Schopenhauer's critique of intellectual intuition in Schelling is therefore not (on its own) evidence that Schopenhauer must be interpreted as giving up access to the thing in itself and as offering only a “hermeneutic” interpretation of experience as a whole. Schopenhauer, correctly understood, has a consistent way of rejecting Schelling and asserting his own metaphysics. Of course, there remain other objections, alluded to briefly earlier, operating from the Kantian axiom that the seamlessness of inner and outer experience entails the blanket inaccessibility of the thing in itself.

(p. 62) It is possible to resist these objections, and there is currently a lively debate on the issue in the literature.<sup>24</sup> Robert Wicks mentions, for instance, a kind of “veil of perception” model in which subtraction of transcendental forms of space and causality leaves inner awareness closer to the thing in itself than fully transcendentially realized intuitions: inner awareness of the will has fewer “veils,” as it were.<sup>25</sup> Without being able to settle the issues here, this kind of interpretation could see Schopenhauer as an early practitioner of a kind of “phenomenology of the extreme” in which unusual “experiences” break through the ordinary and give us more fundamental insight.

On the other hand, the best evidence that Schopenhauer really does take his strictures on Schelling's intellectual intuition seriously is his own use of hermeneutic vocabulary to characterize the ultimate status of the will, what Young calls (“with some reservations”) “the hermeneutic Schopenhauer.”<sup>26</sup> The “deduction” of the will in WWR1 §18 relies on a thought experiment in which the world would “pass by us strange and meaningless” (SW2, 113 [WWR1, 119]) if it were only representation, suggesting that will provides the “meaning” of the world; will is therefore the “solution to a riddle” (SW2, 119 [WWR1, 124]), the “riddle of existence” (SW2, 168 [WWR1, 166]). Similarly, in WWR2 he presents metaphysics as (or on an analogy to) “deciphering” the meaning of a text (SW3, 204f [WWR2, 193]).

But is this really evidence that Schopenhauer ultimately realizes that his metaphysical task is too much like Schelling's intellectual intuition and should be (re)construed hermeneutically, not literally? It is not obvious, for the *metaphysical* understanding of will is able to give “meaning” to the world as representation precisely because it provides its content. The hermeneutic view of the will depends precisely on the metaphysical: intuitive representations give “meaning” to conceptual representations in the same way that the will gives meaning to *all* representation.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Schopenhauer's abusive language toward Schelling is, as we earlier quoted one contemporary as saying, "unbefitting a scholar." And indeed it is redundant, in that Schopenhauer was perfectly capable of framing his critical objections in legitimately scholarly language: in other words, the debate could easily have been conducted on much higher ground. That said, we have tried to show that attending to the nature and vehemence of the insults yields genuinely interesting results. On the one hand, the accusations of meaninglessness and "windbaggery" reinforce the legitimate criticism that Schelling's epistemic methods derive from a hypertrophied conception of reason. On the other hand, the intensity and tedious repetition of Schopenhauer's abusive language point perhaps more to the proximity of his philosophy to that of Schelling than to the distance. Indeed, both are developing metaphysics (a metaphysics, as Schelling comes to conceive it, of will) with full and conflicted awareness of the Kantian epistemic strictures against metaphysics. (p. 63) In view of this, Schopenhauer is particularly concerned to mark his own project as legitimate by highlighting the manner in which he avoids Schelling's errors. Schelling was, perhaps, too close for comfort.

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### Notes:

(1.) Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 249.

(2.) *Ibid.*, 248.

(3.) Indeed, his essay *On the Basis of Morality* was rejected for a prize by the Danish Royal Society in 1837, in part for the harsh things he had to say about Hegel. Not unexpectedly, this elicited an even more furious tirade in Schopenhauer's preface to the published version in 1841 (SW4, XVIII [BM, 13f]).

(4.) See, for instance, Matthias Koßler, "Empirischer und intelligibler Charakter: von Kant über Fries und Schelling zu Schopenhauer," *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 76 (1995), 195–201; Lore Hühn, "Die intelligible Tat, zu einer Gemeinsamkeit Schillings und Schopenhauer," in *Selbstbesinnung der philosophischen Moderne: Beiträge zur kritische Hermeneutik ihrer Grundbegriffe*, edited by Christian Iber and Romano Poci (Cuxhaven & Dartford: Junghans, 1998), 55–94; Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 261–70; many of the essays in

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(5.) Indeed, the first review was written, albeit anonymously, by the Schellingian, Friedrich Ast. See David Cartwright, *Schopenhauer, A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 380.

(6.) Johann Friedrich Herbart *Hermes oder kritisches Jahrbuch der Literatur*, no. 3, 1820; reprinted in *Sechstes Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* (1917), 89–117.

(7.) Cartwright, *Schopenhauer*, 388.

(8.) F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, translated by Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 7:350. Pagination refers to F. W. J. Schelling, *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schellings Sämtliche Werke*, edited by K. F. A. Schelling, I Abtheilung Vols. 1–10. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–1861. We will refer to this work using the standard designation as "the Freedom essay."

(9.) See also SW6, 62 [PP2, 57]).

(10.) *Critique of Practical Reason* [henceforth "second Critique"], translated by Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan, 1956), Ak. 5:47. Page references are to the "Akademie" [henceforth "Ak."] edition of Kant's works, Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1902) by volume and page number. Schopenhauer is far from alone in thinking there is something amiss with this doctrine. See the introduction to Owen Ware, "Rethinking Kant's Fact of Reason," *Philosophers' Imprint* 14, no. 32 (November 2014), 1–21, who himself defends Kant on the issue.

(11.) A few pages further on, Schopenhauer declares of a moral system that depends, like Kant's, on imperatives (rather than, like his, on virtue) "What a slave-morality! [*Sklavenmoral*]" (SW4, 134 [BM, 137]). See also Alistair Welchman, "Schopenhauer," in *The Cambridge History of Moral Philosophy*, edited by Sacha Golob and Jens Timmerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 448–58.

(12.) Ware, *Rethinking*, 16.

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(13.) Kant affirms this connection while, of course, denying the existence of intellectual intuition, arguing that a noumenon should not be interpreted as “a special *intelligible object*” unless we have intellectual intuition (*Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], A256/B311-2; see also B307). Page references are to the standard A and B editions. Schopenhauer discusses this passage in WWR1 (SW2, 565 [WWR1, 505]).

(14.) Schopenhauer remarks that Kant had this insight, too, but “disregarded it” (SW4, 133 [BM, 136]). See Alistair Welchman, “Deleuze and Schopenhauer,” in *At the Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian Philosophy*, edited by Craig Lundy and Daniella Voss (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 213–52.

(15.) This summary reworks some of Alistair Welchman, “Schopenhauer's Two Metaphysics: Transcendental and Transcendent,” in *The Palgrave Schopenhauer Handbook*, edited by Sandra Shapshay (London: Palgrave/Macmillan), 129–49.

(16.) We have already seen how Kant laid the ground for this move with his “fact of reason.”

(17.) See Julian Young, *Schopenhauer* (London: Routledge, 2005), 46–48; Young, *Willing and Unwilling: A Study of the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1987), 23–25.

(18.) This is more or less equivalent to saying that concepts cannot go beyond *actual* rather than *possible* experience, even though Schopenhauer uses the latter phrase frequently. Young (*Schopenhauer*, 49) points this out as a problem.

(19.) See SW2, 46f [WWR1, 62f] where Schopenhauer remarks that if we did use intuitions or “images” to represent concepts in general, then our heads would be full of such pictures: “What a tumult there would be in our heads while listening to a speech or reading a book!” It seems likely that this passage influenced Wittgenstein's famous account of reading (and rejection of a mentalistic account of semantic content) in the *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953). It is worth noting that Schopenhauer later appears to deny the dependence of concepts on words (e.g., SW3, 67 [WWR2, 69]). Severin Schroeder, “Schopenhauer's Influence on Wittgenstein,” in *A Companion to Schopenhauer*, edited by Bart Vandenabeele (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 367–84, at 379, notes the similarities but argues that Schopenhauer has not in fact seen the philosophical problem at all.

(20.) Young, *Schopenhauer*, 51.

(21.) *Ibid.*, 90.

(22.) See John E. Atwell, *Schopenhauer on the Character of the World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), chapters 3 and 4; Julian Young, *Schopenhauer*; Sandra Shapshay, “Poetic Intuition and the Bounds of Sense: Metaphor and Metonymy in Schopenhauer's Philosophy,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 16 (2008), 214–16; Sandra

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(23.) "Demnach ist zwar der Willensakt nur die nächste und deutlichere Erscheinung des Dinges an sich."

(24.) See earlier discussion.

(25.) Robert Wicks, *Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 67f. See SW2, 130–31 (WWR1, 134–35) and SW3, 220f (WWR2, 208–09).

(26.) *Ibid.*, 94.

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