Schopenhauer's Perceptive Invective

Michel-Antoine Xhignesse

michelxhignesse@capilanou.ca

This is a penultimate draft. Please cite the final version: "Schopenhauer's Perceptive Invective," in Jens Lemanski (ed.), *Language, Logic, and Mathematics in Schopenhauer*. Basel, Schweiz: Birkhäuser, 95-107.

Abstract: Schopenhauer's invective is legendary among philosophers, and is unmatched in the historical canon. But these complaints are themselves worthy of careful consideration: they are rooted in Schopenhauer's philosophy of language, which itself reflects the structure of his metaphysics. This short chapter argues that Schopenhauer's vitriol rewards philosophical attention; not because it expresses his critical take on Fichte, Hegel, Herbart, Schelling, and Schleiermacher, but because it neatly illustrates his philosophy of language. Schopenhauer's epithets are not merely spiteful slurs; instead, they reflect deep-seated theoretical and methodological commitments to transparency of exposition.

Schopenhauer's Perceptive Invective

Michel-Antoine Xhignesse

Abstract: Schopenhauer's invective is legendary among philosophers, and is unmatched in the historical canon. But these complaints are themselves worthy of careful consideration: they are rooted in Schopenhauer's philosophy of language, which itself reflects the structure of his metaphysics. This short chapter argues that Schopenhauer's vitriol rewards philosophical attention; not because it expresses his critical take on Fichte, Hegel, Herbart, Schelling, and Schleiermacher, but because it neatly illustrates his philosophy of language. Schopenhauer's epithets are not merely spiteful slurs; instead, they reflect deep-seated theoretical and methodological commitments to transparency of exposition.

Mathematics Subject Classification (2000). Primary 99z99. Secondary 00A00.

Keywords: abstraction, animals, clearness, concepts, distinctness, insults, language

1. Introduction

Schopenhauer is perhaps best known today for his intemperate invective against his contemporaries, especially Fichte and Hegel, whom he subjected to legendary quantities of abuse. It seems fair to say that, so far as most readers are concerned, these venomous vituperations look rather like jealous ranting. And to some extent, the reaction is warranted: a careful catalogue of Schopenhauer's obloquies betrays a singular concern—an obsession, even—with the fame and fortune lavished upon those he most reviled, and the studied indifference with which his own work was first received. Franco Volpi, for instance, has recently published an alphabetized compendium of Schopenhauer's insults, in which he points to the irony of Schopenhauer's own sentiment that the *argumentum ad personam* is the last resort of a player who has otherwise lost the game, and been bested (though perhaps also wronged) by a superior intellect ([28], p. 5).

Volpi's catalogue presents Schopenhauer's insults as de-contextualized and unsourced objects of fun, which they certainly are; but taken in context, Schopenhauer's bilious rhetorical flourishes actually reward sustained critical attention. A closer examination of the insults he so clearly delighted in heaping upon Fichte, Hegel, Herbart, Schelling, and Schleiermacher (as well as the Danish Academy and the German public) reveals a deeper disagreement over the nature of concepts and the function of language, as well as with academic integrity and the norms and structure of intellectual discourse. In other words, Schopenhauer's insults hold a mirror up to his philosophy of language. It is also worth noting that although Schopenhauer's scolding may shock today's readers, it was actually quite common in nineteenth-century German academic circles to publicly excoriate one's rivals in order to underscore the importance of one's own views (if not quite to that extent) ([1], p. 74-5).

This is not to say that we can read a latent philosophy of language implicit in the text of his remonstrations; Schopenhauer's account of language is explicitly and independently presented in his main writings, although it is somewhat scattered and may seem insubstantial by today's standards. But it is important to remember that we have benefitted from three-quarters of a century of empirical linguistics and cognitive science—for a defence of Schopenhauer against the charge of

etymological dilettantism, see ([5] p. 152); for a sketch of how Schopenhauer's ideas fit in with later linguistic and cognitive science frameworks, see also ([5] p. 157-63), and [6], this volume).

Nor do I mean to suggest that Schopenhauer's remarks betray a failure of engagement with the ideas of his contemporaries. On the contrary, he frequently devotes lengthy passages to explaining the substance of his disagreement with the German Idealists. Indeed, it is worth noting that Schopenhauer was not given to slighting all those with whom he disagreed—quite the opposite, as his treatment of Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and Locke (among others) demonstrates. In fact, Julian Young has argued that Schopenhauer subscribes to the same concept-empiricism as the British empiricists ([30] Ch. 2, §4, p. 22-5), and David E. Cartwright has offered a careful analysis of Schopenhauer's intellectual debts to, admiration for, and disagreement with, John Locke [2]. My point, rather, is that we should read Schopenhauer's animadversions in light of his linguistic commitments, treating them as case studies offering a useful illustration of the principles animating his philosophy of language.

I shall begin, in the next section, by sketching the essentials of Schopenhauer's philosophy of language, focusing in particular on its basis in his analysis of concepts. It is here that we find Schopenhauer's explanation for the differences between animal and human cognition, as well as his explanation of the role abstraction plays in facilitating thought. From these premises, I will turn to a closer examination of Schopenhauer's charges against his contemporaries, which I argue centred on their misuse of our powers of abstraction and, consequently, their blatant disregard for the evidence given by intuitive perception.

2. Schopenhauer's philosophy of language

In order to discuss Schopenhauer's philosophy of language, one must first say something about his analysis of concepts. But my goal in this chapter is somewhat narrower in scope, since it concerns Schopenhauer's infamous remarks on Fichte, Hegel, Herbart, Schelling, and Schleiermacher, and what they can teach us about his philosophy of language. Accordingly, I do not have the space to offer a detailed exposition of Schopenhauer's analysis of concepts—an analysis which, in any case, has already been amply documented by Malter [13], Neeley [14], Dümig [5], and, especially, Dobrzański [3] and [4], this volume. Nevertheless, something must be said about concepts, since these hold the key to Schopenhauer's philosophy of language.

The first thing to note is that Schopenhauer relies on concepts to mark the boundary between the animal and the human realms. Humans and non-human animals alike all produce sounds, and according to Schopenhauer these sounds inevitably give voice to the stimulations and movements of individual expressions of the creature's Will ([21] §298, p. 565)—they embody desires and hungers, needs and wants, and basic reactions. But human beings also enjoy the unique capacity to use these sounds to indicate objects in our environment; we are endowed with reason, which allows us to derive concepts (abstract representations) from our perceptions and to use sounds to designate these concepts ([22] §3, p. 27).

This is not to say that we speak by means of aural signs communicating images of our intuited percepts, except insofar as we sometimes use a mental image as a representative of a concept, e.g. when we use the image of some particular dog (or stereotype of a breed of dog) to stand for the whole concept ([21] §28, p. 102; for more on Schopenhauer's denial that thinking requires mental images, see ([7], this volume, esp. §4). Such cases aside, Schopenhauer explicitly denies that concepts are mental images. The question of how it is that words become meaningful is discussed in [6] and [12] (both in this volume), as well as in [4] and [25]; here, I follow Dümig [6], who emphasizes Schopenhauer's remark that "the meaning of the speech is immediately understood [...] Reason speaks to reason while remaining in its own province: it sends and receives abstract

concepts, representations that cannot be intuited [...]" ([23] §9, p. 62-3 and [17] §28). The point, in other words, is that we just immediately grasp the meanings of words ([25] p. 379).

Thinking, according to Schopenhauer, requires us to combine and separate concepts according to the rules codified by logic in the theory of judgements ([19] §29, p. 104-5. Concepts are abstracted from what is given to us by the world in intuitive perception; they allow us to abstract from the individual instances given to us in intuitive perception and think about the world at the general level ([27] p. 272). Schopenhauer thus reverses the epistemic priorities set by the scholastics and rationalists such as Descartes, Leibniz, and Wolfe: the representations of perception are intuitive and immediate, while concepts are merely abstract representations ([17] §26, p. 97; Schopenhauer seems to have been largely in agreement with Locke on this point—see [2]). This means that only intuitions can ever be said to be 'clear', since they are unmediated perceptions. Concepts, on the other hand, are called 'distinct' only when they can be decomposed into their constituent attributes, down to the level of concrete, individual intuitions ([27] p. 270-2). As Schopenhauer puts it, however, "Concepts are confused if one does not quite know their sphere, that is, if one cannot specify the other conceptual spheres which intersect or fill them, or which surround them" ([27] p. 272 [my translation]; For an excellent explanation of just what Schopenhauer means by the 'spheres' of concepts, see [12], this volume. In other words, a confused concept is one which is not grounded in a perceptual intuition. Abstraction does not proceed from the many to the one, but rather from the one (individuals given in intuition) to the many (ideas given by concepts) ([27] 273-4).

It is this facility of abstract representation that allows human beings to think and reason, to execute plans and decide upon courses of action in addition to acting from mere impulse. That said, Schopenhauer did not think that language is necessary for thought, since words do not exhaust the perceptual content behind concepts; words merely simplify the tasks of communication and reasoning ([5] p. 155-6 and [4], this volume). So, although thinking is the manipulation of concepts, concepts are not the ultimate ground of knowledge, since they are mere abstractions from intuited perception, representations of representations. Only intuitions can ground knowledge in this way ([23] §9, p. 63 and [27] p. 270-2). Notice, then, that abstract representation is something which we impose upon the world through our use of language. The world offers us only percepts; language mediates our experience of the world by imposing concepts upon the data given to us in perception ([23] §9; see also [25] p. 370; Whether this amounts to a representational theory of language is an open question; for an excellent discussion of this issue, see [4], this volume). Indeed, Schopenhauer goes so far as to task philosophy with describing, in the abstract, the essence of the world given to us by intuitive, concrete cognition ([23] §15, p. 108-10).

Curiously, although Schopenhauer clearly states that non-human animals are not capable of abstraction and thus have no language, he does think that they understand proper names ([17] §26, p. 99). Since Schopenhauer did not think that non-human animals could mobilize concepts, this might suggest that he did not think of proper names as abstractions—labels, on a causal or hybrid framework—but rather as directly associated with an entity's perceptual properties. And yet in his Berlin lectures, Schopenhauer makes it clear that concepts—among which he includes proper names—designate at the individual, or intuitive, level; they are abstractions ([27] p. 293). So how should we reconcile these two observations?

Presumably, Schopenhauer thought of names as abstractions because names are conferred by human beings, who use them to stand in for individuals. Indeed, he tells us that "in the judgement 'Socrates is a philosopher', several people could very well think of form, size, and other qualities of different people, which would nevertheless correspond to the concept of Socrates, because they never contain everything in the concept that is in the individual: the concept is always an abstractum, a thought, never a single individual thing" ([27] p. 293; translated by Jens Lemanski). In other words, the name 'Socrates' does not stand for a *description* of the man and all of his

properties, but rather designates a concept that abstracts from these and stand for his essence. Two people talking about Socrates may well associate different properties with the man, since the concept cannot hope to encompass them all; what matters is that their concepts each represent the essence of the man and, thus, converge on the right referent. So much for the human understanding of proper names; but what about non-human animals?

When Schopenhauer says that non-human animals can understand proper names, it seems most likely that he had his poodles—all of which shared the name 'Atma' ([1] p. 136)—in mind, since dogs and other animals can easily be taught to respond to the sounds constituting their names. But what does Schopenhauer's use of 'Atma' tell Atma? Not very much, since, as we saw above, Schopenhauer did not think that animals could mobilize concepts, and because he characterized judgement as an operation exclusive to thinking, rather than to intuition ([27] p. 293). In other words, Schopenhauer's use of 'Atma' conveys no descriptive content whatsoever (e.g. '*Schopenhauer's white poodle*') to Atma; rather, so far as she is concerned, it refers directly to her. Atma knows that 'Atma' designates her, whatever she is, but she associates no judgement with her perception of the utterance. Atma knows enough to respond to the utterance of her name, but her conceptual reach goes no further. An animal can be taught to recognize and respond to uses of its name, but not to use it for communicative purposes of its own, since it lacks the capacity to mobilize concepts.

We should, of course, be wary of reading too much or too modern a theory of language into these remarks, especially given their apparent inconsistency. But if my explanation of Schopenhauer's remarks is correct, then it seems as though he subscribed to a theory of naming and reference akin to the Millian, even though Mill would only articulate his views on the subject twenty-five years after the publication of *The World as Will and Representation*, in *A System of Logic* (1843). To be sure, Schopenhauer's remarks on the subject are nothing like as sophisticated as Mill's, and they do not map on seamlessly; what they show, however, is that direct reference was in the air. At least, so long as we read Schopenhauer as tending towards more representationalism than towards a use-theory of meaning (see, e.g., [4], this volume, which mediates between the use- and picture-theories, but emphasizes Schopenhauer's representationalism; [12], by contrast, emphasizes the use-theory instead).

But let us return to Schopenhauer's account of concepts. By way of a helpful analogy, Schopenhauer says that concepts are related to their root percepts in much the same way as arithmetical formulae are related to the operations of thought which give them their content, or as logarithms are related to their number ([17] §27, p. 100-1). Arithmetical formulae allow us to abstract away from particular cases to draw inferences and make generalizations grounded in logic. Consider Euler's Formula:

Euler's Formula (EF)
$e^{ix} = \cos x + i \sin x$

EF is obtained by abstracting from certain features of functions in complex analysis, including algebraic geometry and number theory, and it helps us to say a great many things in engineering, mathematics, and physics. Each of its constants and variables takes a particular content, given by the mathematician's domain of discourse; absent such specification, however, they remain free to roam across all possible interpretations.

It should be straightforwardly obvious, then, that the letters and symbols we use to express EF are largely meaningless without some guide to their interpretation. According to Schopenhauer, this is because they are only very loosely tied to perceptual intuitions, by means of subsidiary mathematical concepts which are themselves abstracted from other, more fundamental concepts. Eventually, when the yarn has been sufficiently unravelled, we will find some sort of perceptual

intuition. In other words, the statements we express using EF are attenuated by the successive degrees of abstraction required to generate them, until they approximate pseudo-concepts or "empty husks".

In much the same way, Schopenhauer thought that the formulation of a concept pares a perceptual intuition down to its component parts, thereby allowing us to focus our attention on just some of its properties and relations at a time. The higher the level of abstraction, however, the less particular content remains in the concept ([17] §26, p. 98-9). So, when we abstract from the name 'Yuni' to the kind 'unicorn', we strip our concept of its Yuni-the-unicorn-specific properties and boil it down to just its unicorn-specific properties; by the time we get from 'unicorn' to '*x*,' the concept no longer has any named, horned-, or horse-content left to it at all, and can be manipulated in thought as easily as arithmetical formulae.

Concepts are thus necessarily severed from their intuitive content, and words are simply the arbitrary signs we use to fix concepts before us so that we can make use of them ([17] p. 99. But concepts do not refer to things in themselves, nor even to representations of things in themselves; they refer merely to the general representations we have created for ourselves by abstracting from the content of what is given to us intuitively in perception, which they then *represent*)([17] p. 99 and [23] §9; see also [4], this volume, which considers the question of just what Schopenhauer's concepts actually refer to in more detail.). This helps to explain Schopenhauer's pessimistic take on dogmatic metaphysics, which argued that metaphysics was rooted in reason (and thus in abstraction) rather than experience (perceptual intuition) ([8] p. 430-1). It also explains why Schopenhauer thought that perfect translations of most words is impossible, as well as why some languages lack words for concepts identified in others ([21] p. §299, p. 567-8; Schopenhauer's theory of translation plays a crucial role in introducing his account of individual understanding—see [12], this volume, esp. §4.2.1-4.2.2)—e.g. 'hygge' in Danish, Hawaiian 'pana po'o' or the Inuit 'iktsuarpok'. Different words pick out different concepts, which in turn are grounded in slightly different perceptual intuitions.

Consequently, "even in mere prose the finest translation of all will relate to the original at best as the transposition of a given piece of music into another key relates to the original" ([21] §299, p. 568). Musical transposition shifts pitches up or down by a regular interval, and we usually transpose music when we want to play a piece on an instrument with a different range, because a musician or vocalist prefers a particular key, lacks the requisite range, or has not yet learned the original key. In other words, while the notes bear the same relationship to one another and the piece is therefore recognizably similar, it sounds quite different (since it is composed of different constituent parts; the sound will be higher or lower). To fill out the analogy, then, the idea is that translation is an exercise in approximation reflecting our inability to capture and communicate the givens of intuitive perception. Schopenhauer goes on to argue that the health of a language is thus to be measured by the ratio of its words to its concepts, so that an oversupply of concepts without words is a sign of intellectual poverty—a state which he thought aptly characterized contemporary German ([21] §300, p. 573). As Dümig has cautioned, however, we should not thereby conclude that Schopenhauer subscribed to linguistic relativism, according to which linguistic categories determine cognitive categories ([5] p. 157-8). For one thing, Schopenhauer explicitly rejects the identity of word and concept; for another, linguistic relativism gets the causal story backwards: words are derived from the need to communicate concepts, which are abstracted from intuitive perception. The perception precedes the development of cognitive categories, which in turn precede the deployment of linguistic signs.

It is also worth noticing that, according to Schopenhauer's story, we cannot communicate the content of our intuitions directly because our bodies offer no mechanism by which to do so. Sight, to use Schopenhauer's example, may well be more adept at or direct in discerning the world, but it does not come equipped with the ability to manipulate percepts so that they can easily be

communicated to others ([21] §301, p. 574-5; c.f. [6] §1, this volume, which argues that for Schopenhauer language has no social function, and serves primarily as a tool of internal processing). Consequently, we must resort to using language, which trades in audible rather than visual symbols. The result is that the content we communicate suffers from a doubled imperfection: (1) because in perceiving the world we merely perceive the phenomenal realm, and (2) because the tool we use to communicate this imperfect vision is itself only capable of transmitting a small part of what is intuited.

3. Learning from the tirades

It would be impractical for me to reproduce all of Schopenhauer's delightfully barbed comments here. Those so interested, however, should start by consulting the following: **WWR1 [23]:** xx-xxi, xxiv, §37-40, §147, §263 *, §495-6, §508, and §517; **WWR2 [24]:** p. 12-3, 34 fn. 6, 40-1, 65, 70, 84, 87, 192-3, 303, 316, 442-3, 464, 582, 590, and 616; **Two Problems [22]**: Preface 1 (esp. ¶xvii-xxvi, ¶xxix-xxx), Preface 2 ¶xli; and therein, p. 99-100 ¶85-6 of **FW**, and p. 149 ¶147 of **OBM**; **PP1:** 6, 21-8, 23 fn. 2, 70, 94-6, 132, 135, 141-2, 141 fn. 2, 144-6, 148, 153, 156-8, 161-3, 166-76, 178-80, 182, 191-2, 196, 375 fn. 18, and 396; **PP2:** §9 p. 8-9, §10 p. 11, §11 p. 12, §21 p. 19, §28 p. 38, §42 p. 59, §74 p. 104-5, §76 p. 109, §77 p. 112, §106 p. 196, §141 p. 279, §219 p. 431, §239 p. 456, 458, §241 p. 468, 470, §250 p. 483, §255 p. 486, §255 p. 486, §283 p. 516-8, 524, 541-2, §297 p. 561-2, and §377 p. 641-2; **FR [17]:** §V p. vi-vii, §VII p. 11-2., §VIII p. 15 & 17, §14 p. 22, §20 p. 39-40, §21 p. 83-4, §26 p. 99, §34 p. 112-3, 117-8, 124; **On Vision [18]**: §III p. vi *; and **Will in Nature [19]**: xxi-ii, 6-7, and 141.

Worse, readers might find such a reproduction tedious and repetitive, since they articulate the same basic complaints—and because Schopenhauer's meticulous editorial process saw him repeat his best turns of phrase across later editions of his works. Yet since my goal is to explain the root criticism that informs Schopenhauer's contumely remarks, I would be remiss if I did not identify at least a few representative instances of his tongue-lashings:

1. A tendency of minds to operate with such abstract and too widely comprehended concepts has shown itself at almost all times. Ultimately it may be due to a certain indolence of the intellect, which finds it too onerous to be always controlling thought through perception. Gradually such unduly wide concepts are then used like algebraical symbols, and cast about here and there like them. In this way philosophizing degenerates into a mere combining, a kind of lengthy reckoning, which (like all reckoning and calculating) employs and requires only the lower faculties. In fact, there ultimately results from this a mere *display of words,* the most monstrous example of which is afforded us by mind-destroying Hegelism, where it is carried to the extent of pure nonsense. But scholasticism also often degenerated into word-juggling ([24] p. 40; Schopenhauer says much the same about Schellingians in his Berlin Lectures ([27] p. 276). Pluder [15] §1 and §2.2 (this volume) offers an excellent explanation of Schopenhauer's derision for Scholasticism).

2. [...] a very peculiar device is often employed whose invention is traceable to Messrs. Fichte and Schelling. I refer to the artful trick of writing abstrusely, that is to say, unintelligibly; here the real subtlety is so to arrange the gibberish that the reader must think he is in the wrong if he does not

> understand it, whereas the writer knows perfectly well that it is he who is at fault, since he simply has nothing to communicate that is really intelligible, that is to say, has been clearly thought out ([20] p. 162).

3. They therefore summarily forsook the only correct path found in the end by those wise men [viz., Bacon, Kant, and Locke], and philosophized at random with all kinds of raked-up concepts, unconcerned as to their origin and true content, so that Hegel's pretended wisdom finally resulted in concepts which had no origin at all, but were rather themselves the origin and source of things ([24] p. 41).

4. [...] good style depends mainly on whether a writer really has something to say; it is simply this small matter that most of our present-day authors lack and is responsible for their bad style. But in particular, the generic characteristic of the philosophical works of the nineteenth century is that of writing without really having something to say; it is common to them all and can therefore be just as well studied in Salat as in Hegel, in Herbart as in Schleiermacher. Then according to the homeopathic method, the weak minimum of an idea is diluted with a fifty-page torrent of words and now with boundless confidence in the truly German patience of the reader the author calmly continues the twaddle on page after page. The mind that is condemned to such reading hopes in vain for real, solid, and substantial ideas; it pants and thirsts for any ideas as does a traveler for water in the Arabian desert and must remain parched ([20] p. 163).

Word-juggling and philosophizing at random; ideas diluted to a weak minimum and spewed in a torrent of empty words; abstruse gibberish arranged to puff up the writer and denigrate his interlocutors; these are Schopenhauer's complaints. Yet there is much more substance to Schopenhauer's diatribes than to the grousing of a grumpy old man raging against the dying of the *licht*.

The problem, as Schopenhauer sees it, is that Hegel and his ilk are preoccupied with manipulating the "empty husks" of concepts, turning them over and over again in order to derive ever-new and fanciful results bearing no essential connection to the world of perceptual intuition ([24] p. 84). G. Steven Neeley characterizes these as 'pseudo-concepts' and 'nonsensical utterances' ([14] p. 49). In other words, Schopenhauer's complaint was that the German Idealists misused abstractions, without regard for either (1) the fact that the more abstract the concept, the less perceptual content it possesses and, thus, the less epistemically sound its grounding, and (2) the laws of thought which govern the manipulation of abstract symbols (viz., identity, non-contradiction, excluded middle, and sufficient reason; for an explanation of just what Schopenhauer and his contemporaries considered "laws of thought," see [15], this volume, §2.1). Allow me to explain.

When Schopenhauer accuses his contemporaries of employing a homeopathic method that dilutes ideas to a weak minimum, he is expressing a concern *about the level of abstraction* employed when they contrast one concept with its opposite—e.g., of finite and infinite, being and non-being, or unity, plurality, and multiplicity ([24] p. 84 and [17] §26, p. 99)—and from this process draw inferences about the nature of the noumenal. The abstract ideas resulting from this process of comparison are so detached from the perceptual kernel underlying them that they cannot be used to communicate, to impart knowledge about the author's perceptual intuition. Unaccompanied by perception, these concepts can yield only the most general knowledge of the thing represented, if

that. They are an invitation for us to explain words with other words—that is to say, to use one imperfect communicative mechanism to communicate another, with ever-diminishing returns ([24] p. 71-2). In other words, a-perceptual concepts are as empty of particular content as logic's constants and variables. No concept can hope to communicate its associated perception directly since, mediated as it is by the use of words, it amounts to an incomplete abstraction from perception. The most abstract concepts (such as those of logic and mathematics) are necessarily the least closely tied to perception, and the less grounded in perception a concept is, the more meaningless the words signifying it become. That said, Schopenhauer took exception to Euclidean geometry because he thought that its reliance on diagrams forestalled the possibility of gaining any real insight into the laws of spatial relationships underpinning those diagrams. See, for example, [22] §15 and [7], this volume, esp. §3.

Consider, for example, the uses to which we put predicates and variables in first-order logic: we use *P(x)* to denote any statement *P* concerning the variable object *x*. We combine variables with constants to get terms, and we combine terms with connectives, delimiters (i.e. brackets), and quantifiers to build the well-formed formulae that allow us to draw valid inferences regardless of the particular content of each abstract variable, constant, or predicate. From Schopenhauer's perspective, we start with propositions, which express linguistic content, and abstract away from them by introducing variables, constants, etc., in order to focus our attention on the logical relationships underpinning our use of words. That said, Schopenhauer was quite dismissive of logic, and he followed his contemporaries in characterizing it as largely useless, since the rules of logic were supposed to govern thinking at the pre-reflective level. For an excellent explanation of Schopenhauer's and his contemporaries' attitude towards logic, see [15], this volume, esp. §1. But Schopenhauer made one significant exception: the rules of logic are useful when it comes to exposing deliberate attempts to deceive in an argument. And this is exactly what Schopenhauer accuses his contemporaries of attempting.

The concepts deployed by the German Idealists, Schopenhauer thinks, are no more than logical constants or variables, capable of being filled by any particular content whatsoever. Worse still, according to Schopenhauer, the Idealists do not offer us a guide to their interpretation, but leave us to interpret their pseudo-concepts as we please. This, then, is the crux of the problem, for the allegation here is that the use of these abstractions is not even underpinned by a communicative intention (as is the case in logic and mathematics).

This is why Schopenhauer thinks that, even when speaking in their native tongue, 'those of limited ability' (including, presumably, the "thick-" and "shallow-skulled" followers of "Hegelry"—[20] p. 166)

> always merely make use of hackneyed phrases (*phrases banales*, *abgenutzte Redensarten*); and even these are put together with so little skill that we see how imperfectly aware they are of their meaning and how little their whole thinking goes beyond the mere words, so that it is not very much more than parrot chatter. For the opposite reason, originality of idiom and individual fitness of every expression used by a man are an infallible symptom of outstanding intellect ([21] §299, p. 569-70).

For more on Schopenhauer's association of genius with transparency of exposition and the ability to compare concepts with perceptions, see [26]. Rather than use language to communicate their intuitive perceptions of the noumenal, Hegel and his "mercenary followers" ([20] p. 96) instead offer us a string of symbols and instruct us to make of them what we will. We are given *words*—"empty, hollow, disgusting verbiage" ([17] §20, p. 127-8)—rather than *ideas*; not so much a *thought* as a

parrot's *squawk*, perhaps paired with a *squeak* and contrasted to a *screech*. Nor is this cacophony governed by the laws of thought, since these are gleefully jettisoned in service of the infamous "dialectic" which plays havoc with identity, non-contradiction, and excluded middle, if not also sufficient reason; c.f. [16] Preface 1, esp. p. 16-9 ¶xx-xxiii, where Schopenhauer takes issue with Hegel's apparent misunderstanding of syllogistic logic and the notion of a contradiction. Indeed, how could it be so governed when its component sounds are utterly devoid of representational content in the first place? The result, Schopenhauer says, is that "their voice found an echo which even now reverberates and spreads in the numb skulls of a thousand stooges" ([17] §20, p. 127-8).

4. Conclusion

I have tried, throughout this chapter, to remain neutral about the merit of Schopenhauer's accusations against his contemporaries. Determining their worth requires much more, and more careful, scholarship than I have had the space to undertake here. And, indeed, this is work that many have already tackled—see, e.g. [9], [10], [11], [29], and [31]. Instead, I have simply tried to show that Schopenhauer's blistering invective gains its content—and its bite!—from his analyses of concepts, and of language more broadly. I have argued that the precise content of the vitriol Schopenhauer infamously directs at his contemporaries is worthy of philosophical attention—not because it expresses his critical take on Fichte, Hegel, Herbart, Schelling, and Schleiermacher (which it does), but because it neatly illustrates his philosophy of language, and his analysis of concepts. In particular, it draws our attention to his emphasis on the epistemic value of perceptual intuition. As long as we stick to what is given to us in intuition, Schopenhauer thought, then we cannot err: intuition is sufficient unto itself ([23] §8, p. 58). Abstract reasoning helps us to communicate our concepts to others ([23] §6, p. 43), but it also introduces new sources of doubt and error, since it takes us further away from the givens of intuitive perception. The Idealists' cardinal sin was just to abuse our faculty of abstraction, piling ever more concepts atop one another without pausing to anchor them in intuitive perception. The result, I have argued, is that Schopenhauer's epithets are not merely spiteful slurs. Instead, they reflect a deep-seated *theoretical*, as well as methodological, commitment to transparency of exposition.

Works Cited

[1.] Cartwright, David E. *Historical Dictionary of Schopenhauer's Philosophy*. Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005.

[2.] —. "Locke as Schopenhauer's (Kantian) Philosophical Ancestor." *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch 84:147-156* 84 (2003): 147-56.

[3.] Dobrzański, Michał. *Begriff und Methode bei Arthur Schopenhauer*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017.

[4.] —. "Problems in Reconstructing Schopenhauer's Theory of Meaning: With references to his influence on Wittgenstein." *Mathematics, Logic and Language in Schopenhauer*. Ed. Jens Lemanski. Springer, forthcoming.

[5.] Dümig, Sascha. "Lebedinges Wort? Schopenhauers und Goethes Anschauungen von Sprache im Vergleich." *Schopenhauer und Goethe: Biographische und philosophische Perspektiven*. Ed. Daniel Schubbe and Søren R. Fauth. Hamburg: Meiner, 2016. 150-83.

[6.] —. "The World as Will and I-Language: Schopenhauer's Philosophy as Precursor of Cognitive Sciences." *Mathematics, Logic and Language in Schopenhauer*. Ed. Jens Lemanski. Springer, forthcoming.

[7.] Follesa, Laura. "From Necessary Truths to Feelings: Logic and Mathematics in Leibniz and Schopenhauer." *Mathematics, Logic and Language in Schopenhauer*. Ed. Lemanski. Springer, forthcoming.

[8.] Glock, Hans-Johann. "Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein: Language as Representation and Will." *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*. Ed. Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 422-58.

[9.] Hühn, Lore. "Die intelligible Tat, zu einer Gemeinsamkeit Schillings und Schopenhauer." *Selbstbesinnung der philosophischen Moderne: Beitrage zur kritische Hermeneutik ihrer Grundbegriffe*. Ed. Christian Iber and Romano Pocai. Cuxhaven & Dartford: Junghans, 1998. 55-94.

[10.] Koßler, Matthias. "Empirischer und intelligibler Charakter: von Kant über Fries und Schelling zu Schopenhauer." *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 76 (1995): 195-201.

[11.] —. *Substantielles Wissen Und Subjektives Trading: Dargestellt in Einem Vergleich von Hegel und Schopenhauer*. New York: Peter Lang, 1990.

[12.] Lemanski, Jens. "Concept Diagrams and the Context Principle." *Mathematics, Logic and Language in Schopenhauer*. Ed. Jens Lemanski. Springer, forthcoming.

[13.] Malter, Rudolf. "Abstraktion, Begriffsanalyse und Urteilskraft in Schopenhauers Erkenntnislehre." *Schopenhauer: New Essays in Honor of His 200th Birthday*. Ed. Eric von der Luft. Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1988. 257-72.

[14.] Neeley, G. Steven. "Schopenhauer and the Limits of Language." *Idealistic Studies* 27.1 (1997): 47-68.

[15.] Pluder, Valentin. "Schopenhauer's Logic in Its Historical Context." *Mathematics, Logic and Language in Schopenhauer*. Ed. Jens Lemanski. Springer, forthcoming.

[16.] Schopenhauer, Arthur. *On the Basis of Morality*. Trans. E.F.J. Payne. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999 [1840].

[17.] —. "On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: A Philosophical Treatise." *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings*. Ed. David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway. Trans. David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 1-198.

[18.] —. "On Vision and Colours: A Treatise." *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings*. Ed. David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway. Trans. David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 199-302.

[19.] —. "On Will in Nature." *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings*. Ed. David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway. Trans. David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 303-460.

[20.] —. *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short Philosophical Essays, volume I*. Trans. E.F.J. Payne. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000 [1974].

[21.] —. *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short Philosophical Essays, volume II*. Trans. E.F.J. Payne. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000 [1974].

[22.] —. *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*. Ed. Christopher Janaway. Trans. Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[23.] —. *The World as Will and Representation, volume I*. Ed. Christopher Janaway. Trans. Judith Norman and Alistair Welchman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1818].

[24.] —. *The World as Will and Representation, volume II*. Trans. E.F.J. Payne. Mineola: Dover, 1966 [1818].

[25.] Schroeder, Severin. "Schopenhauer's Influence on Wittgenstein." *A Companion to Schopenhauer*. Ed. Bart Vandenabeele. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 367-84.

[26.] Shapshay, Sandra. "Poetic Intuition and the Bounds of Sense: Metaphor and Metonymy in Schopenhauer's Philosophy." *European Journal of Philosophy* 16.2 (2008): 211-29.

[27.] Spierling, Volker, ed. *Arthur Schopenhauer: Philosophische Vorlesungen, Aus dem handschriftlichen Nachlass*. München: Piper Verlag, 1986.

[28.] Volpi, Franco, ed. *Die Kunst zu beleidigen*. München: C.H. Beck, 2016.

[29.] Welchman, Alistair and Judith Norman. "Schopenhauer's Understanding of Schelling." *The Oxford Schopenhauer Handbook* . Ed. Robert Wicks. Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

[30.] Young, Julian. *Willing and Unwilling: A Study in the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer*. Dordrecht: Springer-Science+Business Media, B.V., 1987.

[31.] Zöller, Günter. "Schopenhauer's Fairy Tale about Fichte: The Origin of The World as Will and Representation." *A Companion to Schopenhauer*. Ed. Bart Vandenabeele. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 385-402.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Thanks are due to the anonymous reviewers for this volume, who offered many helpful suggestions on previous drafts of this paper. Finally, I would also like to thank Jens Lemanski, who not only commented on previous drafts, but also supplied me with the text of Schopenhauer's Berlin Lectures, which have not yet been translated into English.

Michel-Antoine Xhignesse
University of British Columbia
Vancouver
e-mail: michel.xhignesse@ubc.ca