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Charles University

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

(BA Module + Erasmus students)

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**A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (1818, 1844, 1859). Book II**

**• In Search of the Essence of the World**

🡪 We can start by turning to “the wide province of natural science” (§17):

“The sciences teach how, according to an invariable rule, one condition of matter necessarily followed by a certain other condition; how one change necessarily conditions and brings about a certain other change; this sort of teaching is called *explanation*. The principal sciences in this department are mechanics, physics, chemistry, and physiology” (140)

“the most complete etiological explanation of the whole of nature can never be more than an enumeration of forces which cannot be explained, and a reliable statement of the rule according to which phenomena appear in time and space, succeed, and make way for each other”

*force of nature ≠ law of nature*

(outside the domain (it is manifestation

of causal explanation) of the force of nature)

🡪 Is the World Merely an Idea/Representation?

“what now impels us to inquiry is just that we are not satisfied with knowing that we have ideas, that they are such and such, and that they are connected according to certain laws, the general expression of which is the principle of sufficient reason. We wish to know the significance of these ideas; we ask whether this world is merely idea; in which case it would pass by us like an empty dream or a baseless vision, not worth our notice; or whether it is also something else, something more than idea, and if so, what. Thus much is certain, that this something we seek for must be completely and in its whole nature different from idea; that the forms and laws of the idea must therefore be completely foreign to it; further, that we cannot arrive at it from the idea under the guidance of the laws which merely combine objects, ideas, among themselves, and which are the forms of the principle of sufficient reason” (143)

“Thus we see that we can never arrive at the real nature of things from without. However much we investigate, we can never reach anything but images and names. We like a man who goes around a castle seeking in vain for an entrance, and sometimes sketching the facades. And yet, this is the method that has been followed by philosophers before me” (143)

**• The Way Through the Body**

🡪 The transition to whatever there may be besides the world of representation would never be found “if the investigator himself were nothing more than the pure knowing subject (a winged cherub without a body)” (144)

🡪 Seen from the outside, the *body* seems to be nothing but *a representation among others* (= for the *pure knowing subject*):

“Its movements and actions are so far known to him in precisely the same way as the changes of all other perceived objects, and would be just as strange and incomprehensible to him if their meaning were not explained for him in an entirely different way. Otherwise he would see his actions follow upon given motives with the constancy of a law of nature, just as the changes of other objects follow upon causes, stimuli, or motives. But he would not understand the influence of the motives any more than the connection between every other effect which he sees and its cause” (144)

- *Motivation* is the fourth form of the “principle of sufficient reason” next to *time*, *space* and *causality*

🡪 Will as a Metaphysical Notion: “But all this is not the case; indeed, the answer to the riddle is given to the subject of knowledge who appears as an individual, and the answer is *will*”.

**Not only our single and individual acts, but the body as a whole is the objectification of the will**:

“The body is given in two entirely different ways to the subject of knowledge, who becomes an individual only through his identity with it. It is given as an idea in intelligent perception, as an object among objects and subjects to the laws of the objects. And it is also given in quite a different way as that which is immediately known to everyone, and is signified by the word *will*. Every true act of his will is also at once and without exception a movement of his body. The act of will and the movement of the body are not two different things objectively known, which the bond of causality unites; they do not stand in the relation of cause and effect; they are one and the same, but they are given in entirely different ways: immediately, and again in perception for the understanding. The action of the body is nothing but the act of the will objectified, i.e., passed into perception. (…) In one respect, therefore, I shall call the body the *objectivity of will*”

- *Real Acts of the Will* *≠* Resolutions (Deliberations of the reason about what we shall will at a particular time)

**• Two Principles or, Better: Two Sides of the Same Coin**

- “Every true, genuine, immediate act of the will is also, at once and immediately, a visible act of the body.

(“I know my will, not as a whole, not as a unity, not completely, according to its nature, but I know it only in its particular acts, and therefore in time, which is the form of the phenomenal aspect of my body, as of every object. Therefore the body is a condition of the knowledge of my will. Thus, I cannot really imagine this will apart from my body” (147))

“What as an idea/representation I call my body, I call my will, so far as I am conscious of it in an entirely different way which cannot be compared to any other” (148)

- “And, corresponding to this, every impression upon the body is also, on the other hand, at once an immediately an impression upon the will”

**Pain / Pleasure (Gratification)**

An impression An impression

opposed to the will that is accordance to the will

instantaneous willing of the instantaneous non-willing

impression of the impression

(“It is quite wrong, however, to call pain and pleasure ideas/representations, for they are by no means ideas/representations, but immediate affections of the will in its manifestations” (145))

**• On the Uniqueness of My Experience of My Body**

“what enables us to distinguish our own body from all other objects which in other respects are precisely the same, is that our body appears in consciousness in quite another way *toto genere* different from idea, and this we denote by the word *will*; and that it is just this double knowledge which we have of our own body that affords us information about it (…).” (148)

“Hone of this information have we got directly with regard to the nature, action and experience of other real objects” (148-149)

“…special relation to the body” (149)

“the relation through which the knowing subject is an *individual*, is just on that account a relation which subsists only between him and one particular idea/representation of all those which he has. Therefore, he is conscious of this *one* idea, not merely as an idea, but in quite a different way as a will” (149)

“…what distinguishes that one idea from others is merely the fact that his knowledge stands in this double relation to it alone” (149)

**• The Metaphysical Import of the “Body”**

🡪 Can we hold our body to be the only manifestation of the will?

“Whether the objects known to the individual only as ideas are yet, like his own body, manifestation of a will, is, as we said in the First Book, the proper meaning of the question as to the reality of the external world. To deny this is *theoretical egoism*” (150)

🡪 *The double knowledge expanded* = “We shall accordingly make further use of it as a key to the nature of every phenomenon in nature, and shall judge of all objects which are not our own bodies, and are consequently not given to our consciousness in a double way but only as ideas, according to the analogy of our own bodies, and shall therefore assume that as in one aspect they are idea, just like our bodies, and in this respect are analogous to them, so in another aspect, what remains of objects when we set aside their existence as idea of the subject, must in its inner nature be the same as that in us which we call *will*” (150-151)