

Understanding Schopenhauer
through the Prism of Indian Culture

Understanding Schopenhauer through the Prism of Indian Culture

Philosophy, Religion and Sanskrit Literature

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Preface

The increasing interest in the relationship between the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer and Indian philosophy and culture has given rise to a series of conferences and publications both in India and Germany. The international Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft with its Indian Division, founded in 2002, played and is still playing a leading role in these academic activities. The latest highlight of that international collaborative endeavour was the international congress on *Understanding Schopenhauer through the Prism of Indian Culture – Philosophy, Religion and Sanskrit Literature* which was organized by the Indian Division of the Schopenhauer Society in collaboration with the Schopenhauer Research Centre, University of Mainz, and the Centre for Sanskrit Studies of the Jawarhalal Nehru University in New-Delhi during March 4th and 5th 2010. This event was the occasion to celebrate the 150th death anniversary of the philosopher. The contributions collected in this volume go back to papers held at the conference by scholars from India, Germany and England. Looking at the level of international participation of scholars and also to the intense involvement of students in the debates made the congress a great success. We are indebted to many scholars and institutions for this success and for the achievement of this volume. In particular, I wish to acknowledge our sincere thanks to Dr. Arati Barua (Indian Division of the Schopenhauer Society), Prof. S. R. Bhatt (University of Delhi), Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar (Centre of Sanskrit Studies, JNU) and the Research Associates and the students who had tirelessly worked for days to make the event a success. We are as well solemnly indebted to many institutions, namely, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), the Jawarhalal Nehru University, the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) and the Max Mueller Bhawan for generously giving us financial assistance. Our special thanks are due to Michael Gerhard who had the lion's part of working on the volume and to Jana Hatakova for the final editing. Last but not the least, we wish to thank De Gruyter for taking the book into its program.

Matthias Koßler (President of the Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft)

Abbreviations

English	[German]	Title
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TfP[E]		<i>The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics</i>
FR [G]		<i>The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason</i>
[GBr]		<i>Gesammelte Briefe</i> (Collected Letters)
[Gespr]		<i>Gespräche</i> (Talks)
[Lü]		<i>Werke in fünf Bänden</i> (Works in Five Volumes)
MSR [HN]		<i>Manuscript Remains</i>
ON		<i>On Human Nature</i>
PP [P]		<i>Parerga and Paralipomena</i>
[S]		<i>Senilia</i>
[W]		<i>Sämtliche Werke</i> (Collected Works)
WN [N]		<i>On the Will in Nature</i>
WWI		<i>The World as Will and Idea</i>
WWP		<i>The World as Will and Presentation</i>
WWR		<i>The World as Will and Representation</i>

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Introduction

In four major attempts we make always another try at understanding Arthur Schopenhauer through the prism of Indian culture, particularly ‘*Understanding*’, ‘*Philosophemes*’, ‘*Philosophers*’, and ‘*Literature*’.

In our first section – *Understanding* – Günter Zöller starts with his article *Philosophizing Under the Influence – Schopenhauer’s Indian Thought*. He analyses the influence of Indian and specifically Hinduist philosophy and religion on the formation of Schopenhauer’s philosophical system. In his opening part Zöller draws on Schopenhauer’s own account of causation for discussing the conditions of the possibility of philosophical influences. Then he documents the proximity of Schopenhauer’s systematic outlook on *The World as Will and Representation* to the German idealist tradition and locates Schopenhauer’s originality in his atheistic transformation of the idealist metaphysics of the absolute into the nihilistic drama of the self-affirmation and self-denial of the will. Finally Zöller places Schopenhauer’s selective appropriation of Hinduist philosophy and religion into the systematic context of his critique of religion and his conviction of Europe’s Indian spiritual origins.

Ram Nath Jha goes back to the roots of the original *Upaniṣads* when he elucidates Schopenhauer’s remarks “In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Oupnekhat* (*Upaniṣads*). It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death!” through the Eyes of Principal *Upaniṣads* in his paper *The Upaniṣads – Schopenhauer’s Solace of Life and Death*. The purpose of his topic first is to analyze Schopenhauer’s remarks and then to substantiate them through the relevant texts of the *Upaniṣads*. In his view the remarks in themselves are inherent with the following main imports: The study of the *Upaniṣads* is unique; death is not the nullification of life; knowledge enshrined in the *Upaniṣads*, in fact, is the bridge between life and death.

The next paper from Michael Gerhard – *Suspected of Buddhism – Śaṅkara, Dārāṣekoh and Schopenhauer* – examined the influence of Dārāṣekoh’s and Śaṅkara’s ideas on the translation of the *Upaniṣads* Schopenhauer had read, called the *Oupnek’hat*. Gerhard depicts that the Europeans got a taste of Indian classical teachings long before Friedrich Max Müller and others translated the tenets into European languages in the 19th century. It was the Persian translation undertaken by Prince Dārāṣe-

koh who is known to the world for his unorthodox and liberal views. His Persian translation attracted any attention from European scholars. Abraham Hyacinth Anquetil-Duperron undertook the task of translating Dārāšekoh's *Oupnek'hat / Upaniṣads* into Latin. Nevertheless, this became the framework for Schopenhauer, who discovered the thread of sanity through the labyrinth of unintelligible jargon written by Anquetil-Duperron. *Oupnek'hat* also became the basis on which many more Europeans could now dwell into the study of the *Upaniṣads*. Schopenhauer did not doubt the authenticity of *Oupnek'hat*, as translated by Anquetil-Duperron. Dārāšekoh had retained many Sanskrit words intact and un-translated. Anquetil-Duperron also left those words and other Persian syntaxes intact, but explained them in a glossary. The *Chandogyopanīṣad* formed the basis of Schopenhauer's work *The World of Will and Representation*. Dārāšekoh's most important legacy is the translation of fifty *Upaniṣads*, known under the title of *Sirr-i akbar*. It was completed in 1657, together with paraphrases and excerpts from commentaries which in various cases, though by no means throughout, can be traced back to Śaṅkara and forward to Schopenhauer on the line of Buddhism and Sufism.

Thomas Regehy's paper '*The Ancient Rhapsodies of Truth*' – Schopenhauer, Friedrich Max Müller and the Hermeneutics deal with Schopenhauer, Müller and the *Upaniṣads*. It is a well-known fact that Müller once met Schopenhauer, and that he wrote a brief report about this meeting. When he published the first volume of his famous edition of *The Sacred Books of the East* in 1900 he appraised Schopenhauer's efforts very much, referring to several pages of the main work and of the *Parerga* as well. It is interesting to state that he absolutely disagreed in respect to the high value Schopenhauer was attributing to Anquetil-Duperron's translation into Latin Gerhard sowed above. Regehy will elucidate the kind of 'hermeneutics' Schopenhauer applied to arrive at his interpretation of his favorite text *Oupnek'hat / Upaniṣad*, which inspired and comforted him throughout his lifetime in an extraordinary manner.

In the second section – Philosophemes – Margit Ruffing starts with her paper *The Overcoming of the Individual in Schopenhauer's Ethics of Compassion, Illustrated by the Sanskrit Formula of the 'tat tvam asi'*. Ruffing shows that Schopenhauer's ethics can be considered as a part of his theoretical philosophy and that the priority of the metaphysics of will, consequently apply to all disciplines of philosophy, to religion and even to other sciences, characterises his philosophical system. She reduced Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will itself to one single phrase: The

world is the self-knowledge of the will. It is obvious that a phrase like this has to be interpreted, and that it allows for many different interpretations, but it can also be helpful to comprehend the deeper sense of the metaphysical thought as well as its different possible interpretations. Ruffing find the same sort of concentrated and compact one-phrase-explication of a central thesis concerning the ethical theory, given to the use of one of the mahāvākyas, the ‘Great Words’ of the Upaniṣadic tradition, the ‘tat tvam asi’. In the context of several central passages of his ethical texts, Schopenhauer reverts to this set phrase to give a short and pregnant definition of seeing through the principium individuationis, that is the essential knowledge.

Matthias Koßler is concerned with *The Relationship between Will and Intellect in Schopenhauer with Particular Regard to his Use of the Expression ‘Veil of māyā’*. In his paper he shows how will and intellect in Schopenhauer’s philosophy relate to each other with special respect to the question of a comparability of his metaphysics to Indian thought. His starting point is the statement of the coincidence or identity of the subject of cognition and the subject of willing which in his early dissertation Schopenhauer calls “incomprehensible” while in the mature *The World as Will and Representation* he tells us that this main work in its entirety is the “explanation” of this identity. The investigation follows the path through all parts of the main work in order to reconcile two seemingly contradictory theories which both Schopenhauer claims to be “fundamental truths” of his philosophy, namely that on the one hand cognition is conditioned by will (theory of the primacy of will over the intellect) and on the other hand that will and cognition are absolutely separate. Since also the individuation of the subject is connected with the identity of subject of cognition and subject of willing some clarifying results – f.i. in regard to the unity of will as thing in itself and to the concept of through seeing the principle of individuation – will help to make a comparison to Indian thought, namely to the unity of *brahman* and the uncovering of the ‘veil of māyā’, more exact.

Raj Kumar Gupta deals with *The Indian Context of Schopenhauer’s ‘Holy Man’ or ‘Beautiful Soul’*. For Schopenhauer the way to salvation lies in the denial of the will to live through renunciation and holiness. Gupta stated that the ‘holy man’ or the ‘beautiful soul’ who denies the will through asceticism represents highest knowledge, wisdom, and virtue. So Schopenhauer finds many examples of holiness in the lives of Christian saints, mystics, and penitents. But his most important source for defining and illustrating holiness remains the Indian scriptures and

the lives of Hindu and Buddhist saints and mystics. He calls Indian mythology “the wisest of all mythologies” and the *Vedas* “the fruit of the highest knowledge and wisdom”. This is one source to which Schopenhauer returns again and again, can hardly keep away from for any length of time. Schopenhauer often uses the metaphor of the ‘veil of *māyā*’ to indicate the fleeting and delusive nature of the phenomenal world. The ‘holy man’ must transcend the ‘veil of *māyā*’ and abolish the distinction between his own individuality and that of others. The *Upaniṣadic* precept ‘*tat tvam asi*’ best expresses for Schopenhauer the idea of the essential identity of all living beings in their inner nature. It may well be that Schopenhauer’s basic concepts had already been formed when he came in contact with Indian religious and philosophical literature. But in his analysis of holiness he shows himself thoroughly steeped in his Indian material, making extensive use of ideas, images, metaphors, symbols, and allusions drawn from this source. It is perhaps in his analysis of holiness that Schopenhauer shows closest affinity to Indian scriptures he admired so deeply and praised so lavishly.

The charge that the Indic world-views are permeated by a ‘pessimistic’ spirit is quite common in some circles, and the various responses that have been offered to this allegation are also fairly well-known, Ankur Barua pointed out in her article *All Is Suffering – Reexamining the Logic of ‘Indian Pessimism’*. However, the discussion of these issues often overlooks the finer shades and meanings of the term ‘pessimism’, and consequently does not sufficiently distinguish between pessimism/optimism as a temperament (psychological pessimism/optimism PsP, PsO) and pessimism/optimism as a correlate of a fully-developed metaphysical system (philosophical pessimism/optimism PP, PO). Barua analyze four possible combinations, namely, PsO/PO, PsP/PO, PsO/PP, and PsP/PP. Then she applies the results of this analysis to an examination – partly through a dialogue with Schopenhauer – of the types of pessimisms/optimisms which she can detect in Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Nyāya and early Buddhism.

Jens Lemanski pointed out *The Denial of the Will-To-Live in Schopenhauer’s World and his Association between Buddhist and Christian Saints*. The project of a ‘Description of the Universe’ has Schopenhauer outlined the principles underlying the world, both as will and as representation. When it comes to the principles of ethics, this necessitates a description of the pessimist point of view and the denial of the will-to-live, one which Schopenhauer thus does not simply identify himself with, but which figures as one element in his greater project. Lemanski sketches out how the Romantic and Humboldtian idea, that such a description it-

self has to give a genuine impression of the world, requires Schopenhauer to find real examples for his ethical principles. Schopenhauer finds those, Lemanski says, in Buddhist and Christian traditions of asceticism. He tries to show that the way in which Schopenhauer understood and conceived the Buddhist denial of the will-to live stood under the strong influence of the mystical tradition of the *imitatio christi*-doctrine. *Imitatio Christi* provides the underlying typology for Schopenhauer's concrete understanding of the denial of the will-to-live.

In the third section – *Philosophers* – Indu Sarin explores Schopenhauer's perspective on the realization of morality through transcending egoism and compares it with Vivekānanda's understanding of morality in her article *Transcending Egoism through Moral Praxis. Schopenhauer and Vivekānanda*. For both, moral praxis is the realization of intrinsic values and is based on love, sympathy and compassion, which express the unity of one-self with others. Both of them share the point of view that ego is the source of all vices, creating divisions, generating conflicts and leading to suffering. The ego produces all kinds of illusions. The renunciation of ego is the disappearance of illusion and the emergence of morality. Like Vivekānanda, Schopenhauer also advocates metaphysical foundation of morality because it is to be realized through renunciation of will-to-live, which is phenomenal in nature. The foundation of morality for both of them rests on 'tat tvam asi', which implies metaphysical identity of all beings, Sarin stated out. Vivekānanda shows the path of *yoga* for exercising self-restraint and overcoming egoism. However, such specific path has not been given by Schopenhauer. Nevertheless, both of them hold that moral action generates a tranquil state of mind; in this sense morality comes closer to spirituality setting aside all the exclusions and divisions. Schopenhauer and Vivekānanda extend the meaning of morality even to non-human beings of the universe making room for the environmental ethics, which is of great relevance in the contemporary scenario.

Ramesh Chandra Pradhan explores the links between two famous European philosophers, Schopenhauer and Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Indian Philosophy, especially Vedānta and Buddhism – *Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein and Indian Philosophy: Some Forgotten Linkages*. Both Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein had deep appreciation of Indian philosophy, the former directly and the latter indirectly, in their own systems of thought. Schopenhauer was deeply involved in the Indian approach to the problems of life. This is reflected in his own view of life as depicted

in his work *The World as Will and Representation*. He has laid down a vision of life and world which closely resembles the world-view laid down in Buddhism and Vedānta so Pradhan. Schopenhauer shares with the Indian thinkers the metaphysical urge to overcome the life of suffering based on the individual will. *nirvāṇa* or *mokṣa* has been the goal of life in Buddhism and Vedānta Pradhan pointed out, and this has inspired Schopenhauer's philosophy of life. Wittgenstein, who has been inspired by Schopenhauer, has laid down a world-view in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* which aims at the life free from desires of the individual will and thus makes man transcend the individual will and the world. He shares the Buddhist and the Vedāntic ideal of freedom from the mundane world as the ultimate goal of life. Pradhan higher suggestion is that if we explore the cross-cultural and philosophical links across traditions, it may help us in understanding other philosophers and our own tradition better.

In the fourth and last section – *Literature* – Sitansu Ray is concerned with *Schopenhauer and Tagore on the Key to Dreamland*. Schopenhauer and Rabindranāth Tagore belong two different times and cultures, yet, while studying on dream, they deserve parallel study since both them had had immense introspection in this phenomenon as revealed in their works Ray stated out. Schopenhauer's philosophy of dream precedes Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung and Neo-Freudians. He never uses the term sub-conscious, nor does he give any undue emphasis on sex. As a former student of medical science (though he did not complete the course), Schopenhauer is well-versed in anatomy, physiology, nervous and vascular systems, function of the heart, the digestive system all leading to the dream-phenomena of the brain from within. Schopenhauer establishes 'will' on the core of dream, obviously subjected to his 'principle of sufficient reason'. In the depth of 'thing-in-itself', the East and West do not differ much, though their way of presentation differ much. Tagore exploits dream in his creativity. Ray discusses some of Tagore's stories, viz. *Kankal*, *Kshudhita Pashan*, *Manihara*, and *Nishithe*, all based on dream. Thereafter, he deals with some of his excellent poems on the theme of creative dream, viz. *Swapna*, wherein we enjoy the poet's dreamy journey to the bygone golden age of India. By virtue of dream the intangible is brought into tangibility, the past into the present. The consort of the dreamland is not bonded with factuality. Yet, the truth behind dream has its own reality, as per Schopenhauerian philosophy. The philosopher's discourse and the poet's artistic intuition, combined together, make the harmonious, complimentary and over-all study of dream.

(I) Understanding

Philosophizing Under the Influence – Schopenhauer's Indian Thought

Günter Zöller

[...] religions are like lightning bugs.
*They need darkness in order to glow.*¹

The paper analyses the influence of Indian and specifically Hinduist philosophy and religion on the formation of Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophical system. The opening section draws on Schopenhauer's own account of causation for discussing the conditions of the possibility of philosophical influences. The middle section documents the proximity of Schopenhauer's systematic outlook on the world as will and representation to the German idealist tradition and locates Schopenhauer's originality in his atheistic transformation of the idealist metaphysics of the absolute into the nihilistic drama of the self-affirmation and self-denial of the will. The final section places Schopenhauer's selective appropriation of Hinduist philosophy and religion into the systematic context of his critique of religion and his conviction of Europe's Indian spiritual origins.

(I) The Causality of Influence

Doxographical wisdom has it that Schopenhauer was the first Western philosopher whose intellectual development and resulting system was deeply influenced and extensively shaped by Far Eastern thinking, to be precise, by Indian philosophical and religious thought under the twin forms of Hinduism and Buddhism. In Schopenhauer's work Western philosophy, so the *communis opinio* goes, for the first time thoroughly opened itself to non-Western intellectual and spiritual traditions and had its assumptions and presuppositions challenged by alien views and values.

The received view of Schopenhauer's primal encounter with Indian thought has much to recommend it. Schopenhauer was exposed to Indian

1 P II, p. 366.

philosophy and religion in 1814, after having completed his dissertation on the *Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (1813) and at the point of beginning work on his early *opus magnum*, *The World as Will and Representation*, published in late 1818, with the year 1819 indicated on the title page. Schopenhauer's extant literary remains (*Handschriftlicher Nachlaß*) contain references to classical Indian texts – in Latin translations from Persian, with interspersed Sanskrit – taken in Dresden and dating from 1814.² Some months earlier in the same year, while still in Weimar, Schopenhauer had borrowed this Latin-Persian translation-edition of the *Upaniṣads* / *Oupnek'hat*, published in 1801, from the Ducal Library for seven weeks (26 March through 18 May) and subsequently purchased the two volumes, comprising some 1,900 pages,³ in order to take them with him to Dresden.

In the published main work, which in its first edition of 1818 consisted of a single volume divided into four books and an appendix on the *Critique of the Kantian Philosophy*, Indian thought figures prominently in Book Four, devoted to the affirmation and denial of the will and containing Schopenhauer's ethics of "compassion" (*Mitleid*) and metaphysics of "redemption" (*Erlösung*).⁴ Further substantial references to Indian philosophy and religion are to be found in Schopenhauer's late collection of essays, *Parerga and Paralipomena* (literally, *Byworks and Things Left Aside*; 1851), especially in the chapters entitled *On Ethics*, *On Religion* and *Something on Sanskrit Literature*.⁵

While Schopenhauer's exposure and enthusiastic reaction to Hinduist philosophy can be traced to the early formative phase of his philosophical development, his acquaintance with Buddhist philosophical and religious thought seems to date from later in Schopenhauer's life. In the second edition of *The World as Will and Representation*, which appeared a quarter of a century after the work first was published (1844) and added a substantial second volume with chapters correlated thematically with what now became the first volume of the revised work – in the section entitled *On the Metaphysical Need of the Human Being* (*Über das metaphysische Bedürfnis des Menschen*) – Schopenhauer refers to the paucity of knowledge about Buddhism in Europe when *The World as Will and Representa-*

2 HN I, p. 106, 120.

3 HN V, p. 338 et seq.

4 W I, p. 419–421, 442.

5 P II, p. 236 et seqq., 404 et seqq., 420 et seqq.

tion was first conceived and published.⁶ But rather than tracing the Buddhist affinities of his philosophical outlook to later developments in his thinking, Schopenhauer insists on the “agreement” (*Übereinstimmung*) between the results of his own philosophy in its early presentation of 1818 and the Buddhist outlook on the world and the human being in it, which Schopenhauer came to know and appreciate only years later. Schopenhauer's point about the relation between his own thinking and Buddhist thought is the shared truth value of both outlooks on life, which yet were obtained independent of each other and which thus function as mutually effective modes of confirmation.

Schopenhauer's rejection of causal categories such as biographical “influence” (*Einfluß*) and “effect” (*Wirkung*) for his own assessment of his relation to Buddhism, in favor of a claimed objective agreement between the two outlooks only discovered *ex post*, calls into question the suitability of a causal-biographical account in the parallel case of Schopenhauer's relation to Hinduist thought. The fact that Schopenhauer knew about Hinduist philosophy and religion when working on the first edition of *The World as Will and Representation* does not by itself establish an essential formative influence of Hinduism on Schopenhauer's philosophical outlook and its articulation in a system of philosophy centered on the prevalent affirmation and the rare denial of the “will to life” (*Wille zum Leben*). And even if one were to consider such an early shaping influence on the part of Hinduist thought, there would have to have been a predisposition in Schopenhauer's thinking at the time in order for the influence to have an influence and for the effect to have an effect. Put in term of Schopenhauer's own account of causality,⁷ for causation to occur, it is necessary but not sufficient that there is a cause present. There also has to be the susceptibility on the part of the entity to undergo causation for such a cause to take effect. Drawing on Immanuel Kant's earlier account of causation in the *Transcendental Dialectic* of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Schopenhauer terms the predispositional, virtual basis for actual causation, “character.”⁸ The term “character” is to be taken generically and is employed to designate the potential of a being for undergoing specific causal influences. In the case of the human character the cause

6 W II, p. 186.

7 E, p. 29 et seqq.

8 E, p. 47 et seqq.

my take the form of a motive, in which case the causation is operative through the medium of cognition.⁹

By analogously extending the relation between cause and character from beings, including human beings, to the creative process and to the production of cultural artifacts, the intellectual predisposition of Schopenhauer's emerging philosophical system to a possible causal influence by Hinduist thought can be considered the underlying character of Schopenhauer's philosophy. Only if the characteristic preparation was in place on the part of Schopenhauer's basic mode of thinking, could there be, or have been, a causal and, more specifically, motivational influence of Hinduist thinking on Schopenhauer's thinking. By definition such a prior philosophical potential for subsequent influential activation precedes any specific influence by the future activator. In his theory of causation Schopenhauer maintains that the systematic priority of character over cause attests to character, including the human character, being innate and constant. Analogously, the character of a philosophical system may be considered comparatively fixed with regard to its subsequent articulation and modification. No matter how far reaching the later influences on it may turn out to be, they will not change the system's basic outlook – its character, so to speak – but only bring it out and possibly aid in developing it more fully. To be sure, unlike in cases of natural causation, including the causation involved in human action, the basic character of the philosophical system that Schopenhauer eventually developed need not have inborn in a literal sense. For purposes of critically rethinking the nature and extent of the influence of Hinduist thought on the early Schopenhauer, it suffices to assume the prior formation of his thinking, in advance of his acquaintance with Indian philosophy and religion and, as it were, in preparation for such subsequent occasioning influence.

(II) The Empire of the Will

In looking for the prior philosophical outlook that predisposed Schopenhauer to his enthusiastic and affirmative reception of Indian thought in general and of Hinduist philosophy and religion in particular, one has to take into account the genesis of Schopenhauer's philosophical system in classical German philosophy, especially in Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. Its petu-

9 E, p. 31 et seq.

lant polemics against the “professor philosophy of the philosophy professors” (*Professorenphilosophie der Philosophieprofessoren*) notwithstanding, Schopenhauer's system of philosophy, as completely contained in the first edition of *The World as Will and Representation* from 1818, is an integral, if aberrant part of the post-Kantian philosophical development known as German idealism. Not only does Schopenhauer, who was born in 1788, share with his rough contemporaries, Fichte, born in 1768, Schelling, born in 1775 and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, born in 1770, the ambition of transforming Kant's critique of reason into a critical system of philosophy. Schopenhauer was in effect the first one among them to actually present and publish a complete philosophical system, comprising epistemology, natural philosophy, aesthetics and ethics. Moreover, Schopenhauer shares with Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel the conviction that human existence in its final purpose or “vocation” (*Bestimmung*) is not exhausted by the natural world in space and time. Finally, the focus of Schopenhauer's philosophy on the will, is prepared by the central role of the will and of willing in Kant, Fichte and Schelling, for whom willing and the will figure as the factual and normative core of human existence. Even Schopenhauer's extrapolation of the will from an anthropological (or psychological) principle to a cosmological principle – from the human will to the “world as will” – and the concomitant dissociation of the will from practical reason, and all reason, is prefigured in Schelling's voluntaristic metaphysics according to which “willing is the prototype of being” (*Wollen ist Ursein; On Human Freedom* [1809]).

What Schopenhauer adds to the contemporary post-Kantian development is a resolute atheism and the resulting philosophical ambition to keep his entire system free of religious and theological prejudices and presuppositions. The very title of Schopenhauer's main work indicates the systematic absence of God or the divine being from the conception and execution of his philosophy. Of the three traditional metaphysical themes that had oriented and motivated Western thought throughout the modern era – God, the soul and the world – only the world is left over as the object of Schopenhauer's philosophy with its dual cosmological perspective of will and representation. God is entirely left out of the picture of the world as will and representation, and the soul is transformed from an independent metaphysical entity into the subject of representation always to be considered in its essential correlation with the object so represented.

To be sure, Schopenhauer's atheism is not a reductive naturalism or materialism that denies the existence of anything other than matter located in space and time and moving or being moved in space and over time. Following Kant (as well as Fichte and Schelling), Schopenhauer conceives of the spatio-temporal realm ("world as representation") as limited and enclosed by a surrounding and encompassing realm outside of space and time – and independent of the latter's laws, chiefly among them the principle of sufficient reason ("world as will"). But unlike Kant and his earlier successors, who had tied the supersensible realm to a super-human, divine ground ("the unconditional", "the absolute") and so maintained the inherent rationality of the world, Schopenhauer dissociates the cosmic will and its world from the basic law of rationality, i. e., the principle of sufficient reason, and maintains the world's basic character as aimless and endless striving.

With the absence of a divine being and an overall rational plan, the world as seen by Schopenhauer is in need of alternative forms of relief from the will's endless self-affirmation and the ensuing antagonistic particularization of the will in its world and as its world. For Schopenhauer it is the artistic and the ethical forms of life that provide such relief and, for that matter, rescue, salvation or "redemption" (*Erlösung*), from the eternally striving and eternally frustrated will. Schopenhauer holds that the transgression of individuality achieved in rare aesthetic and ethic experience removes the aesthetically or ethically deindividuated, "pure" subject of such extraordinary experience from the world as will, thereby also freeing it from the suffering tied up with striving willing. According to Schopenhauer, the systematic basis for the possible evasion from the will is the status of the subject of cognition as the originally independent cognitive function with regard to which the will is an object and hence possibly subject to quasi-logical procedures of abstraction and negation. But Schopenhauer also suggests that the will is not removed from without but suspended in a logically contradictory and really dramatic act of self-destruction, self-denial or self-negation.

Throughout Schopenhauer refers his readers to their own and others' relevant experiences in the presence of great art, especially tragic art, and under the impression of grave suffering, including one's own, that may result in the annihilation of the will. Alternatively, the negation of the will may result from the intellectual insight, by means of philosophical analysis and reflection, into the nature of the world as will and that of the will as constitutively frustrated and hence inducing suffering. Lacking any entity that might be known to survive the demise of the will,

Schopenhauer refers to what remains or appears after the eventual aesthetically, ethically or cognitively achieved removal or suspension of the will as “nothing” (*Nichts*) – the very word with which also the last book of *The World as Will and Representation* ends in the work's original edition.¹⁰

(III) Indo-European Thinking

While Schopenhauer's avowed atheism eliminates specifically theological concepts and arguments from the foundation and elevation of his philosophical system, religiously dimensioned terms and teachings are not altogether absent from his philosophy. In particular, the very notion of ethical “salvation” (*Erlösung*) from life's suffering and the final orientation of ethical practice toward the ascetic life and the attitude of “resignation” (*Entsagung*) is informed by religious traditions, most prominently the teachings of Christianity about the otherworldly destination of human life. Yet Schopenhauer's affirmatively resorting to religious traditions and teachings is not to be taken as an endorsement of the religion involved. Rather Schopenhauer is selectively appropriating elements of a particular religion, while leaving aside other features of it, thereby subjecting the religion in question to instrumental use for purposes of Schopenhauer's own philosophical agenda.

It is precisely in this context of a selective philosophical appropriation of religious thought that Schopenhauer resorts early on and also later in his work to Hinduist philosophical and religious thought. Rather than engaging with the full spectrum of Hinduist religious practices, he focuses throughout on those aspects of Indian autochthonous philosophy and religion that agree with his own prior position and thereby are suitable to lending support to his own philosophical system. This hermeneutic practice not only removes Schopenhauer's engagement with India from any attempt to encounter an alien religious culture. It also integrates the selectively appropriated elements of Hinduist philosophy and religion into an essentially Western philosophical system.

Most importantly, though, in Schopenhauer Hinduist philosophy and religion, like Christian philosophy and religion, are subject to a critical account of religion in general – and thereby of any and all religion – that assesses the phenomenon of religion with a triple focus on the epis-

¹⁰ W I, p. 487.

temological status, the ethical purpose and the socio-political function of religion. On Schopenhauer's analysis, religion responds to the human "need for a trans-empirical significance of life" (*metaphysisches Bedürfnis*),¹¹ an ultimate dimension of meaning that transcends our banal everyday existence and equally banal eventual disappearance. Religion offers such a philosophical perspective on life in the shape of a "metaphysics of the people" or "popular metaphysics" (*Metaphysik des Volkes, Volksmetaphysik*), a philosophy ("metaphysics") tailored to the comprehension level of its recipients and therefore capable of instructing and guiding their ethical conduct and of providing them with solace in the hardships of life and in death.¹² Strictly speaking, though, and metaphorically put, religion is never more than "the truth in the cloak of the lie" (*die Wahrheit im Gewande der Lüge*),¹³ and the priests have to be considered "a strange middle thing between imposters and ethical teachers" (*ein sonderbares Mittelding zwischen Betrügern und Sittenlehrern*).¹⁴

For Schopenhauer Hinduist philosophical and religious thought offers a prime example of the dual nature of religion. The Vedic scriptural traditions are said to represent the esoteric side of Hinduist thought, while the polytheistic popular beliefs manifest its exoteric aspect.¹⁵ Schopenhauer shows particular interest in the exoteric, allegorical or mythical teachings of the need for salvation from the "misery of being" (*trauriges Daseyn*) and of the "transmigration of the soul" (*Metempsychose*) to its morally conditioned reincarnation based on the individual's ethical comportment in the previous life.¹⁶ He stresses that the dogma of the transmigration of the soul has a moral sense according to which all evil done eventually will be undergone by its very doer and all evil received reflects a prior evil done by the very sufferer.¹⁷

The two Hinduist dogmas – or rather "mythological fictions"¹⁸ – singled out by Schopenhauer serve the same moral function as the two basic Christians teachings concerning the resignation from the life in this world and the expectation of reward or punishment in the afterlife.¹⁹ Schopen-

11 P II, p. 355.

12 P II, p. 344, 358 et seq.

13 P II, p. 353.

14 P II, p. 356.

15 P II, p. 235 et seq., 240.

16 P II, p. 424.

17 P II, p. 425.

18 N II, p. 426.

19 P II, p. 405.

hauer ventures the hypothesis that the exact correspondence between Christianity and Hinduism in that particular but essential regard points to the former's "somehow Indian origin" (*irgendwie indischer Abstammung*).²⁰ For Schopenhauer, who here stands in a German tradition dating back to Johann Gottfried Herder (*Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 1784–91) and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel (*Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*; 1806), India is to be regarded as the "fatherland of humankind" (*Vaterlande des Menschengeschlechts*).²¹ Hence the significance of Indian thought for the genesis of Schopenhauer's philosophical system does not reside in specifically Hinduist dogmas and teachings but in a shared outlook on life that links Christian Europe with Hinduist India but that also reduces the specifics of both religious traditions to a generic philosophical core. The Indian influence that Schopenhauer's thinking underwent is not an event in his own intellectual biography but the, historical or mythological, Indian shaping of European Christianity, which is thus severed from its roots in Judaism and the Near East in general and traced back to India and the Far East.²²

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20 N II, p. 404.

21 P II, p. 236.

22 P II, pp. 236, 241.