The World as Will and Idea (Vol. 1 of 3)

Arthur Schopenhauer

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The World As Will And Idea

By

Arthur Schopenhauer

Translated From The German By

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Vol. I.

Containing Four Books.

“Ob nicht Natur zuletzt sich doch ergünde?”—GOETHE

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TRANSLATORS' PREFACE.

The style of "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung" is sometimes loose and involved, as is so often the case in German philosophical treatises. The translation of the book has consequently been a matter of no little difficulty. It was found that extensive alteration of the long and occasionally involved sentences, however likely to prove conducive to a satisfactory English style, tended not only to obliterate the form of the original but even to imperil the meaning. Where a choice has had to be made, the alternative of a somewhat slavish adherence to Schopenhauer's _ipsissima verba_ has accordingly been preferred to that of inaccuracy. The result is a piece of work which leaves much to be desired, but which has yet consistently sought to reproduce faithfully the spirit as well as the letter of the original.

As regards the rendering of the technical terms about which there has been so much controversy, the equivalents used have only been adopted after careful consideration of their meaning in the theory of knowledge. For example, "Vorstellung" has been rendered by "idea," in preference to "representation," which is neither accurate,

intelligible, nor elegant. “Idee,” is translated by the same word, but spelled with a capital,—“Idea.” Again, “Anschauung” has been rendered according to the context, either by “perception” simply, or by “intuition or perception.”

Notwithstanding statements to the contrary in the text, the book is probably quite intelligible in itself, apart from the treatise “On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason.” It has, however, been considered desirable to add an abstract of the latter work in an appendix to the third volume of this translation.

R. B. H.

J. K.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

I propose to point out here how this book must be read in order to be thoroughly understood. By means of it I only intend to impart a single thought. Yet, notwithstanding all my endeavours, I could find no shorter way of imparting it than this whole book. I hold this thought to be that which has very long been sought for under the name of philosophy, and the discovery of which is therefore regarded by those who are familiar with history as quite as impossible as the discovery of the philosopher’s stone, although it was already said by Pliny: _Quam multa fieri non posse, priusquam sint facta, judicantur?_ (Hist. nat. 7, 1.)

According as we consider the different aspects of this one thought which I am about to impart, it exhibits itself as that which we call metaphysics, that which we call ethics, and that which we call

æsthetics; and certainly it must be all this if it is what I have already acknowledged I take it to be.

A _system of thought_ must always have an architectonic connection or coherence, that is, a connection in which one part always supports the other, though the latter does not support the former, in which ultimately the foundation supports all the rest without being supported by it, and the apex is supported without supporting. On the other hand, a _single thought_, however comprehensive it may be, must preserve the most perfect unity. If it admits of being broken up into parts to facilitate its communication, the connection of these parts must yet be organic, _i.e._, it must be a connection in which every part supports the whole just as much as it is supported by it, a connection in which there is no first and no last, in which the whole thought gains distinctness through every part, and even the smallest part cannot be completely understood unless the whole has already been grasped. A book, however, must always have a first and a last line, and in this respect will always remain very unlike an organism, however like one its content may be: thus form and matter are here in contradiction.

It is self-evident that under these circumstances no other advice can be given as to how one may enter into the thought explained in this work than _to read the book twice_, and the first time with great patience, a patience which is only to be derived from the belief, voluntarily accorded, that the beginning presupposes the end almost as much as the end presupposes the beginning, and that all the earlier parts presuppose the later almost as much as the later presuppose the earlier. I say “almost;” for this is by no means absolutely the case, and I have honestly and conscientiously done all that was possible to

give priority to that which stands least in need of explanation from what follows, as indeed generally to everything that can help to make the thought as easy to comprehend and as distinct as possible. This might indeed to a certain extent be achieved if it were not that the reader, as is very natural, thinks, as he reads, not merely of what is actually said, but also of its possible consequences, and thus besides the many contradictions actually given of the opinions of the time, and presumably of the reader, there may be added as many more which are anticipated and imaginary. That, then, which is really only misunderstanding, must take the form of active disapproval, and it is all the more difficult to recognise that it is misunderstanding, because although the laboriously-attained clearness of the explanation and distinctness of the expression never leaves the immediate sense of what is said doubtful, it cannot at the same time express its relations to all that remains to be said. Therefore, as we have said, the first perusal demands patience, founded on confidence that on a second perusal much, or all, will appear in an entirely different light. Further, the earnest endeavour to be more completely and even more easily comprehended in the case of a very difficult subject, must justify occasional repetition. Indeed the structure of the whole, which is organic, not a mere chain, makes it necessary sometimes to touch on the same point twice. Moreover this construction, and the very close connection of all the parts, has not left open to me the division into chapters and paragraphs which I should otherwise have regarded as very important, but has obliged me to rest satisfied with four principal divisions, as it were four aspects of one thought. In each of these four books it is especially important to guard against losing sight, in the details which must necessarily be discussed, of the principal thought

to which they belong, and the progress of the whole exposition. I have thus expressed the first, and like those which follow, unavoidable demand upon the reader, who holds the philosopher in small favour just because he himself is a philosopher.

The second demand is this, that the introduction be read before the book itself, although it is not contained in the book, but appeared five years earlier under the title, "_Ueber die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde: eine philosophische Abhandlung_" (On the fourfold root of the principle of sufficient reason: a philosophical essay). Without an acquaintance with this introduction and propadeutic it is absolutely impossible to understand the present work properly, and the content of that essay will always be presupposed in this work just as if it were given with it. Besides, even if it had not preceded this book by several years, it would not properly have been placed before it as an introduction, but would have been incorporated in the first book. As it is, the first book does not contain what was said in the earlier essay, and it therefore exhibits a certain incompleteness on account of these deficiencies, which must always be supplied by reference to it. However, my disinclination was so great either to quote myself or laboriously to state again in other words what I had already said once in an adequate manner, that I preferred this course, notwithstanding the fact that I might now be able to give the content of that essay a somewhat better expression, chiefly by freeing it from several conceptions which resulted from the excessive influence which the Kantian philosophy had over me at the time, such as—categories, outer and inner sense, and the like. But even there these conceptions only occur because as yet I had never really entered deeply into them, therefore only by the way and quite

out of connection with the principal matter. The correction of such passages in that essay will consequently take place of its own accord in the mind of the reader through his acquaintance with the present work. But only if we have fully recognised by means of that essay what the principle of sufficient reason is and signifies, what its validity extends to, and what it does not extend to, and that that principle is not before all things, and the whole world merely in consequence of it, and in conformity to it, a corollary, as it were, of it; but rather that it is merely the form in which the object, of whatever kind it may be, which is always conditioned by the subject, is invariably known so far as the subject is a knowing individual: only then will it be possible to enter into the method of philosophy which is here attempted for the first time, and which is completely different from all previous methods.

But the same disinclination to repeat myself word for word, or to say the same thing a second time in other and worse words, after I have deprived myself of the better, has occasioned another defect in the first book of this work. For I have omitted all that is said in the first chapter of my essay “On Sight and Colour,” which would otherwise have found its place here, word for word. Therefore the knowledge of this short, earlier work is also presupposed.

Finally, the third demand I have to make on the reader might indeed be tacitly assumed, for it is nothing but an acquaintance with the most important phenomenon that has appeared in philosophy for two thousand years, and that lies so near us: I mean the principal writings of Kant. It seems to me, in fact, as indeed has already been said by others, that the effect these writings produce in the mind to which they truly speak is very like that of the operation for cataract on a

blind man: and if we wish to pursue the simile further, the aim of my own work may be described by saying that I have sought to put into the hands of those upon whom that operation has been successfully performed a pair of spectacles suitable to eyes that have recovered their sight—spectacles of whose use that operation is the absolutely necessary condition. Starting then, as I do to a large extent, from what has been accomplished by the great Kant, I have yet been enabled, just on account of my earnest study of his writings, to discover important errors in them. These I have been obliged to separate from the rest and prove to be false, in order that I might be able to presuppose and apply what is true and excellent in his doctrine, pure and freed from error. But not to interrupt and complicate my own exposition by a constant polemic against Kant, I have relegated this to a special appendix. It follows then, from what has been said, that my work presupposes a knowledge of this appendix just as much as it presupposes a knowledge of the philosophy of Kant; and in this respect it would therefore be advisable to read the appendix first, all the more as its content is specially related to the first book of the present work. On the other hand, it could not be avoided, from the nature of the case, that here and there the appendix also should refer to the text of the work; and the only result of this is, that the appendix, as well as the principal part of the work, must be read twice.

The philosophy of Kant, then, is the only philosophy with which a thorough acquaintance is directly presupposed in what we have to say here. But if, besides this, the reader has lingered in the school of the divine Plato, he will be so much the better prepared to hear me, and susceptible to what I say. And if, indeed, in addition to this he is a

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