

# Translator's Corner

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## **SWEDENBORG'S HIDDEN INFLUENCE ON KANT<sup>†</sup>**

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### **PART 2: ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER'S VIEW OF SWEDENBORG AND OCCULT PHENOMENA**

Of several possibilities for continuing the Kant-Swedenborg controversy one that is particularly well-suited is Schopenhauer's metaphysics. In the Schopenhauerian metaphysical framework occult phenomena are given their *a priori* place as what are termed *qualitates occultae* [occult qualities].

In his parapsychological tract *Versuch über Geistersehn und was damit zusammenhängt* [Essay on Spirit-seeing and Associated Phenomena] Schopenhauer too criticizes Kant's one-sided reception of Swedenborg and his polemic *Träume eines Geistersehers* as wrong from the beginning. Here Schopenhauer develops his own "theory of spirits," a theory which in parapsychology is still today given special attention as a valid explanation of occult phenomena.

Ultimately, in the framework of Schopenhauer's metaphysics Kant's moral law and the idea of freedom of the will are explained as occult phenomena and fitted into it as "qualitates occultae." And thereby the Kant-Swedenborg controversy as seen from Schopenhauer's perspective takes a surprising turn.

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## II.1 SCHOPENHAUER'S PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

Schopenhauer's chief work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* [The World as Will and Idea], begins with the declaration, "The world is my idea."<sup>501</sup> By this Schopenhauer does not simply mean the obvious fact that people can imagine the world to be anything whatever; by this he basically wants to say above all that the whole of reality exists merely as the world a person mentally pictures it to be. What is given directly to consciousness's knowledge is not the nature of a thing as it might be in itself, what are given to it are rather only the ideas of things. Put another way, all things are only appearances. In this fundamental idea Schopenhauer follows Kant's concept of cognition.

Consequently he also even denies space, time and causality to objects and attributes them to man's cognitive faculty.

From the beginning the human cognitive faculty carries space, time and causality in itself, so that it can immediately project it outward into the world. Were that all that Schopenhauer had to say about reality, however, it would then remain a pure and empty idealism. The world would then be nothing but appearance, nothing but a dream dreamed by the human spirit. But Schopenhauer wants to go beyond Kant's transcendental idealism. He wants to determine and explain the thing-in-itself, which with Kant remains merely an unknowable "X." So he ventures a statement about the essence of that "thing-in-itself."

In so doing Schopenhauer proceeds from the assumption that this "thing-in-itself" must lie at the base not only of the outer objects in the world of appearances, but also at the base of one's own person. To begin with he investigates the way in which man experiences his own body. As Schopenhauer conceives it, man becomes aware of his own body in a twofold manner. For one, the body is presented to the intellect in the awareness of other things as observable objects of the imagination. For the other, however, body is experienced directly in the awareness of self. In this inner view, the body now appears to Schopenhauer to be an expression of man's will.

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<sup>501</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Vol. 1, § 1, text by Arthur Hübscher (Ed.): *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, (Wiesbaden 1972) Vol. 1, p. 29.

The activity of body is nothing other than the objectified action of the will, i.e., the action of will that has stepped into the field of observation.<sup>502</sup>

The body's movements arise from the motions of the will; for Schopenhauer, indeed, they are strictly speaking nothing other than the will's motions observed outwardly. Further, the organs and form of the body Schopenhauer explains to be modes of expression of the human will to live. Thus he comes to the thesis that man's body is an objectivized will, beheld as an object:

For this reason I would distinguish this truth above all others and term it...philosophical truth. One can put the same statement differently and say, My body and my will are one.<sup>503</sup>

So it is that Schopenhauer approaches the "thing-in-itself" as it were from within, comprehending it first as personal will, and then, drawing an analogical conclusion, as the general will to live:

If, therefore, the physical world is to be something more than merely our idea, then we must say that the world beyond the idea, thus the world in itself and as to its inmost essence, is what we find directly in ourselves as will.<sup>504</sup>

According to Schopenhauer, it is due to the conclusion that results from this analogy that the objects of our ideas are for the first time given a real basis. For according to Schopenhauer's metaphysical conviction, the will is:

...also the power that causes the plant to sprout and vegetate, indeed, it is the power by which the crystal crystallizes, the power that turns the magnet to the North Pole, the power whose impact rings out from the collision of heterogeneous metals, the power that appears in the chemical affinity of substances as repulsion

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<sup>502</sup> Ibid., § 18, p. 143.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid., § 18, p. 146.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid., § 19, p. 149.

and attraction, separation and union, yes, and what is more, ultimately it is the gravity, which exerts itself so powerfully in all matter, pulling the stone to the earth and the earth to the sun...<sup>505</sup>

In Schopenhauer's conception all these powers that lie at the base of the causal relationships in the world of ideas have their place outside space, time and causality and are therefore to be regarded as primordial manifestations of Will that are not further explainable. Schopenhauer therefore designates these powers of nature *qualitates occultae*. The power itself is

a power of nature. As such it is without basis, that is to say, it lies outside the causal chain of rational principle and philosophically is acknowledged as a direct objectification of Will, which is the absolute of all nature..., i.e., *qualitas occulta*.<sup>506</sup>

In Schopenhauer's metaphysics, Will objectifies itself in its clarity on ever higher levels, thereby attaining ever increasing individuality in the realm of ideas.

While Will first expresses itself merely as a general power of nature in what is inorganic, it objectifies itself in the plant and animal kingdoms as the notion of species, and finally within the human species as individual character:

On the higher levels of Will's objectification we see individuality significantly come to the fore, particularly in the case of man, as the great diversity of individual human character.<sup>507</sup>

To the occult powers of nature on the inorganic level, which react in the measure of the occurrence of certain causes, there corresponds, therefore, in Schopenhauer's metaphysics of Will on its higher levels of objectivization within human reach the likewise occult individual charac-

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<sup>505</sup> Ibid., § 21, p. 154.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., § 26, p. 178 f.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., § 26, p. 179.

ter, which determines all the actions of the human individual upon the occurrence of specific motives.

This specially and individually determined quality of Will, owing to which its reaction to the same motive is different in every person, constitutes that which is called character and indeed, because it is not known *a priori* but only through experience, empirical character...And, like the powers of nature, it too is primordial, unchanging, and unexplainable. With animals it is different in every species, with humans in every individual.<sup>508</sup>

In the whole world that appears to us, as Schopenhauer understands the world, it is the power of Will that rules. Consequently, in an admittedly problematic analogy to the human will, Schopenhauer feels justified in saying: The world considered as to its absolute existence and inner nature, is Will; it exists as Will appearing.

This Will Schopenhauer now understands as a unified, primitive power which in playing out its roll for the sake of the *principium individuationis* (Space, Time, Causality) divides itself into many individuals "wills":

We know that the multiplicity is altogether necessarily required by space and time and conceivable only in it, which we call the *principium individuationis*.<sup>509</sup>

This will in no way possesses either reason or consciousness from the beginning, but is rather from its origin onward "a blind, impetuous urge," which runs through various levels of objectification and finally finds its knowledge of itself in the human reason:

Will, which considered in itself is knowledgeable and only a blind, impetuous urge...through the supervening world of idea developed for its service obtains the knowledge of its own aspira-

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<sup>508</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *Preisschrift über die Freiheit des Willens* (text of Zürich edition, Drontheim, 1859) Vol. VI, p. 87.

<sup>509</sup> *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, § 25 p. 175.

tion and therefrom what it is and wants—namely, that it is nothing other than this world, life exactly as it is...So it is all the same and only a pleonasm if we decide instead of saying simply “Will,” to say “the will to live.”<sup>510</sup>

In this passage the pessimism which is decisive in the whole of Schopenhauer’s thinking comes to the fore. For just from Will as “blind urge” the suffering permeating the whole world becomes understandable. That is to say that that metaphysical Will, as Schopenhauer sees it, is permeated by strife and opposition. It rages against itself. Because it is such, its realizations in the world of appearances also become ridden with strife and filled with opposition—as the opposition in the inorganic world, as the constant battle in the organic world, as the endless altercations in the human world. To the extent the suffering of the world consists in this unceasing, universal strife, the deeper split in the Will which brings forth the world shows itself.

It brings about suffering; but what suffers equally is itself, specifically, in its stages of realization and objectification:

Thus everywhere in nature we see strife, battle and the fortunes of war; and it is just therein that we will recognize the division of itself essential to the will more clearly.<sup>511</sup>

It is due to this essential division of itself of the will, which makes its appearance as the battle of every species of animal against every other in the struggle about matter, and as the struggle of every individual human being with every other for self-preservation, that in Schopenhauer’s pessimistic *Weltanschauung* all of life and being bears the inevitable mark of suffering.

On this account we want to consider the inner and essential fate of Will in human existence. Everyone will easily find the same

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<sup>510</sup> *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, § 54 (text of Zürich edition), Vol. II, p. 347.

<sup>511</sup> *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, § 27, p. 197.

thing expressed again, only less strongly, in the life of animals on different levels; and in their suffering too can be fully convinced of what an essential element of life suffering is.<sup>512</sup>

With Will as the “thing-in-itself” forming the world Schopenhauer has found a metaphysical principal pointing to a unified explanation of the whole world of appearance. Yet he holds himself aloof from such principles because of tradition and contemporary philosophy. For Schopenhauer the “will to live” is immanent in the world and therefore not of an otherworldly, Divine origin. Also, his “thing in itself” does not, as with Hegel, bear the character of spirit or, as with Kant, the property of unknowability, but is definable rather as a dark urge and blind will.

Still, now the question presents itself, How can man free himself from this incessant suffering? In Schopenhauer's view this deliverance from Will's constant striving takes place progressively on three distinct levels. On the first level a preliminary deliverance from the Will's continual striving becomes possible by man's raising himself above the awareness of individual appearances to the pure observation of ideas. Then he transcends his limited and suffering filled individuality and its mode of cognition, in that he comes to a disinterested consideration of things:

When, however,...attention is no longer directed to the motives of one's desires, but grasps things free of their relation to Will, thus when it considers them purely objectively, without interest, without subjective involvement, surrendering to them totally, insofar as they are simply ideas, not insofar as they are motives—then the ever pursued but ever evasive rest on that road to desire is suddenly attained, and all is entirely well with us. This is the painless state that Epicurus extols as the highest good and as the state of the gods: for we are, for that moment, rid of Will's base urge, we celebrate the Sabbath from the prison-labor inflicted by desire, the wheel of Ixion stands still.<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> Ibid., § 56, p. 389.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid., § 38, p. 252.

What man beholds at this level are no longer the transient forms of Will subject to the *principium individuationis*, but its pure objectifications in the world beyond space and time, or, as Schopenhauer says, following the model of Plato's doctrine of ideas, the observation of the "ideas" of things. These, raised above all that is transitory, are the essential, perpetual archetypes of appearances. The archetype of the stone, the archetype of the tree, the archetype of man. The objects in the world of appearance, on the other hand, are the ideas which have been broken up through the *principium individuationis*":

In the aesthetical way of looking at things we have found two inseparable constituents: the cognition of the object, not as an individual thing, but as Platonic idea, i.e., as the perduring form of this whole species of things; then, the self-consciousness of the knowing subject, not as an individual, but as a pure, will-less, cognizing subject.<sup>514</sup>

The deeper view of ideas is above all a matter belonging to Art, in whose different disciplines Will's various levels of objectification are contemplated.

A special place among the different arts is accorded by Schopenhauer to music, since in his opinion it not only presents the pure idea, as do the rest of the artistic disciplines, but also Will itself directly.

Music is namely as direct an objectification and image of the whole Will as the world itself is, indeed as ideas are, whose manifold appearances make up the world of individual things. Music, therefore, is in no wise like the other arts, the image of ideas, but is the image of Will itself, the objects of which are also ideas. It is just for this reason that the effect of music is so much more powerful and penetrating than that of the other arts, for these speak only of the shadow, but music speaks of the Essential Entity.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>514</sup> Ibid., § 38, p. 251 f.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., § 52, p. 324.



Still, the creation and contemplation of Will's ideas in art brings no lasting release from Will and from the suffering conjoined with it. In aesthetic contemplation man can free himself from his painful individuality only for the moment of contemplation itself, but ultimately he is incapable of loosing himself from Will and its endless striving:

Hence, it does not become for him a sedative for the Will, as in the next book we will see it quieted the saint who has attained resignation; it does not release him from life for ever, only for a moment, and thus it is not yet the way out of life for him, but only a temporary comfort in it.<sup>516</sup>

So art is only a transient soothing of the suffering Will. Schopenhauer considers it necessary to seek for other ways in which it will be possible to ultimately free oneself from Will and its perpetual striving.

On the second level the negation of Will takes place in man's ethical relations. It consists in one's alleviating the suffering of others through sympathy. This too is given a metaphysical basis by Schopenhauer. If all living beings are enmeshed in the unified primitive Will, then they must understand each other as being bound to one another from their root and upwards, grasping that basically everything is one:

As we earlier saw that hate and wickedness are contingent upon egotism and we saw that this has its cause in knowledge being constrained in the *principium individuationis*, similarly, we found the origin and essence of righteousness, and then, as righteousness progresses, of love and magnanimity—to their highest degree, to be the insight arising from that *principium individuationis*, which alone, in removing the difference between the self and the alien individual, makes possible and accounts for perfect goodness of character, to the point of unselfish love and generous self-sacrifice for others.<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> Ibid., § 52, p. 335.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., § 68, p. 468 f.

On this higher level of knowledge the deceptive bounds of individuality are broken through. The suffering of others is one's own, and it is precisely from this insight that sympathy develops. In it man suffers all the suffering of mankind, indeed of all living things. Sympathy can thus become the source of the moral actions that overcome egoism; it expresses itself in righteousness and human kindness. Basically this means: from egoism springs Evil, from sympathy Good. This is the basic principle of Schopenhauer's ethics. According to this the Will which creates suffering is denied by the act of sympathy.

Nevertheless, ethical behavior is not also a general denial of Will, because while it does indeed limit one's own egotistical will, this notwithstanding it advances the life of another person and in this altruism affirms the will of the other even at the cost of its own will. Schopenhauer seeks for a way to completely deny Will and thereby to find ultimate release. Still, how is this fundamental denial of Will completed?

The denial of Will is accomplished, according to Schopenhauer's doctrine, in the same way as is the affirmation of Will by means of knowledge:

Will affirms itself as explained earlier, to wit, if Will has its own essence as idea given to it completely and distinctly in objective realization, that is to say, in the world and life, this knowledge does not obstruct its willing in any way. Rather is it so that precisely this life that is learned about in this way is also willed by it as such. What it had done up to now without knowledge, as blind urge, it now does with knowledge, consciously and prudently. The opposite of this, the denial of Will to live, manifests itself if, upon attaining that knowledge, willing ends—if thereafter the known individual appearances no longer act as motivating factors of willing, but the total knowledge of the essence of the world, which mirrors Will, developed through the conception of the idea, becomes the sedative of the will, and in consequence Will freely dissolves itself.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, § 53, p. 359.

Once man has grasped that he is at one and the same time the cause and the victim of suffering in the world, and if he is totally overcome by this knowledge of the identity of all individuals in the metaphysical Will, then this knowledge leads him to asceticism. In this fundamental abnegation all motives lose their influence on the individual will to live. Then, in place of despair and doubt a remarkable calm enters the soul. At the end of this asceticism stands complete inner peace, in which Will is entirely extinguished.

At the end of our entire consideration, however, the result is also that at the same time that Will is directing knowledge to itself, through this very knowledge a nullification and self-denial of Will in its fullest appearance is possible. So that in such a case the freedom that otherwise belongs only to the thing in itself, and can never manifest itself in the appearance, does in such a case also come forth in the appearance and, while it nullifies the essence underlying the appearance while continuing to exist itself in time, brings forth a contradiction of the appearance with itself, and just thereby produces the phenomena of holiness and self-denial.<sup>519</sup>

According to Schopenhauer's conception, the negation of Will as "the thing in itself" is accomplished over the individual will, the will that succeeds in attaining self-knowledge and negation in the process of the *principium individuationis*. In the individual's renunciation of life the self-abrogation of the metaphysical Will is accomplished.

Here, however, a difficulty in understanding Schopenhauer's philosophy arises. What issues from Will still cannot but happen as it does. How then can man, who himself originates from Will, have the power to freely turn against Will?

Putting the question yet more pointedly, How can Will negate and abrogate itself?

Schopenhauer solves this question with an arbitrary proposition. He maintains simply: Certainly man is causally determined in all his actions in the realm of appearances, but the metaphysical will that lies at the base

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<sup>519</sup> Ibid., § 55, p. 362.

of every individual is free. He comes to self-awareness in the individual's reason and in so doing has the possibility of negatingly turning himself against the all-determining Will.

Schopenhauer seeks to rationalize the positing of this solitary exception in an otherwise thoroughly determined world of appearance in the following way. He proceeds from the ethical realities: from responsibility, from imputation, from the sense of guilt. These obviously presuppose freedom. But where do they have their seat? Not in action, for this is thoroughly causally determined. Therefore freedom must lie in man's mental (intelligible) character. When he imputes his acts to himself, then it is not actually because he has done this or that, but because he is such that he cannot but do this or that. By this reasoning Schopenhauer is led again into the realm of metaphysical speculation. For man's freedom does not consist in his empirical character, but, as Schopenhauer says in imitation of Kant, in his "intelligible character:"

That which by its inevitable development in time and consequent breakdown into individual actions becomes known as empirical character, upon abstraction from this temporal form of the appearance is the intelligible character, as Kant terms it. He displays his immortal service most excellently in showing this distinction and in describing the relationship between freedom and necessity, that is to say, between the will as thing-in-itself and its appearance in time. The intelligible character is therefore coincident with the idea, or still more correctly, with the original act of will that manifests itself in the idea.<sup>520</sup>

Thus it is Schopenhauer's thought that before birth man has freely decided on a specific character, in accord with which he then acts and for which he is then brought to account. So he can say: Admittedly man is unfree in his empirical existence, but as "thing in itself" he is free:

Freedom is not done away with by my interpretation, but merely drawn back, namely from the province of individual acts,

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<sup>520</sup> Ibid., § 28, p. 208.

where it is demonstrably not to be found, up into a higher region that is not so easily accessible to our knowledge. In other words, it is transcendental.<sup>521</sup>

According to Schopenhauer's conception it is precisely from this that the possibility of negating Will also arises. Logically, therefore, this negation of Will must take place first in the intelligible realm before it can proceed in the empirical.

But how can Schopenhauer's intelligible character that is determined *a priori* once and for all so change itself through the empirical knowledge of the nothingness of existence that it suddenly negates life, when it has affirmed this very life for the long time up to the moment of this enlightenment?

For the possibility of such a fundamental reversal of the *a priori* determined intelligible character by means of an empirically acquired knowledge would there not unquestionably be the presupposition of the possibility of an interaction between the sentient and the intelligible character?

For the purpose of negation must one not assume the mediating influence of the empirical character's sensory knowledge on the intelligible character? Would not therefore, contrary to Schopenhauer's ethics, a change of the intelligible character through knowledge be possible?

In this passage in Schopenhauer's metaphysics there appears the same problem of the mediation between the intelligible and the sensible world as in Kant's moral philosophy.

Here a curious paradox arises. On the one hand, in Kant's moral philosophy it was definitely necessary to postulate the freedom of the intelligible will; nevertheless, for the purpose of epistemology it was not fundamentally necessary to demonstrate it. On the other hand, in and from Schopenhauer's metaphysical conception the freedom of the metaphysical will would certainly be fundamentally possible (since the will as "thing in itself" is free, and every individual has a direct part in the

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<sup>521</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, "Über die Freiheit des menschlichen Willens," Drontheim 1839, *Schluss und höhere Ansicht* (text of the Zürich edition), Vol. VI, p. 139.

metaphysical, free Will) and for the purpose of the negation of the will is even necessary to be assumed. Yet Schopenhauer does not in principle consider this possibility of intelligible freedom in his own ethics.

In this viewpoint Schopenhauer's ethics would be better suited to Kant's epistemology than to his own metaphysics, while conversely Kant's ethics would fit better it into Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will than into his own epistemology.

In this context the following point may be of particular interest in regard to my subject:

According to Schopenhauer's "doctrine of ideas" ideas exist as pure objectifications of Will. Objectification, according to Schopenhauer, means, "brought into the form of the object."

An object, however, of necessity also has a subject.

In his Kant-critique he explains, "that being an object at all...requires being a subject."<sup>522</sup>

And so the question presents itself, By which subjects are these ideas actually perceived?

According to Schopenhauer the eternal and unchangeable "Platonic" ideas, which lie outside space and time, are observed only by a pure, perceiving subject of cognition that is not in space, time and causality. Man, then, according to Schopenhauer, is in position to elevate himself to a pure subject of cognition only in rare moments, as for example, in artistic contemplation.

Here the difficulty arises, however, that eternal ideas in Plato's sense should in Schopenhauer's epistemology be dependent on the perception of a subject. The idea as objectification of the will must come into and pass out of being depending upon whether or not there happens to be a pure subject that contemplates it. But the Platonic idea is not subject to such conditions. Schopenhauer could escape this problem only by postulating an ever existing community of pure subjects of cognition, a kind of "spirit kingdom," in which the ideas would continually be observed, so that their existence would be assured.

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<sup>522</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, "Kritik an der Kantischen Philisophie," in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I (1818), (text of the Zürich edition) Vol. II, p. 614.

Therewith the possibility of occult phenomena would be opened in Schopenhauer's metaphysics of Will, which would obviously be effected beyond space and time, just as the perception of ideas.

## II.2 SYNTHESIS: SWEDENBORG'S GIFT OF SEERSHIP AND KANT'S MORAL DOCTRINE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SCHOPENHAUER'S METAPHYSICS OF WILL

### II.2.1 Swedenborg and Occult Phenomena in the Framework of Schopenhauer's Parapsychological Theory

In his parapsychological writings Schopenhauer prefixes the concrete case examples of occult phenomena to his metaphysical explanation for the possibility of their existence, in order to be able to fit the phenomena treated of immediately into his own philosophical framework. In contrast to Kant Schopenhauer does not see his own world view threatened by the possible existence of occult phenomena, but rather hopes their evidence will provide just the wanted *a posteriori* confirmation of his *a priori* fundamental assumption. Therefore he refers to research on the occult as "experimental metaphysics."<sup>523</sup>

Since it already follows from the Kantian cognitive system that space and time are merely forms of observation without their own, objective reality—Schopenhauer too calls the pure forms of observation forms of the understanding, or simply *Gehirnfunctionen* [brain functions]—for him it is immediately clear that

the thing in itself, thus that which alone is real, is free of those two forms of the understanding and has no awareness of near or far, present, past, and future. Consequently, the disjunctions based on these forms of observation do not prove to be absolute. They no longer present insurmountable limits for the modes of cognition under discussion, which as a result of being refigured by their organs, are essentially modified.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> Cf. Schopenhauer, "Versuch über Geistersehen und was damit zusammenhängt," in *Parerga und Paralopomena* I (text of the Zürich edition), Vol. VII, p. 292.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

Under this condition one could immediately understand the data of occultism as “practical metaphysics,”<sup>525</sup> for the interactions of *visio et actio in distans* would come directly through the “thing in itself” which lies beyond the Space and Time pertaining to the *principium individuationis*.<sup>526</sup>

By virtue of this, as Schopenhauer further elaborates, is opened the

possibility of direct influence of individuals on one another, independent of spatial proximity or distance, ...and this direct communication which is based on the essential nature of things likewise explains the possibility of dreams that come true, of the awareness of surroundings in sleepwalking, and finally of clairvoyance.<sup>527</sup>

Here, in the framework of Schopenhauer’s parapsychological theory, Swedenborg’s gift of seership also receives its *a priori* place. In his “Essay on Spirit-seeing,” Schopenhauer even carefully considers Kant’s *Dreams of a Spirit-seer* and here characterizes Kant’s critique of Swedenborg’s gift of seership as fundamentally flawed. Kant’s critique of Swedenborg’s alleged “contact with spirits” proceeds from a “spiritualistic explanation” of spirit appearances, according to which “spirits,” in spite of their immateriality appear in space and are able to affect the normal senses:

All rational argument against views like this disputes this thoroughly untenable spiritualistic view and likewise Kant’s critical development of the point made in the first, or theoretical part, of his *Dreams of a Spirit-seer illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics*. Therefore, in order to get a correct view of all the pertinent phenomena here, one has to surrender this spiritualistic view entirely, this assumption that there is an immaterial and yet locomotive [mobile] substance which acts on the body and therewith also on the senses—analogue to the way in which matter does. And in its place one has to adopt the idealistic standpoint, from which one

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid., p. 329.



sees these things in an entirely different light and holds entirely criteria for their possibility.<sup>528</sup>

However, as an explanation for spirit appearances as Swedenborg alleged to have experienced them, this "spiritualistic" view, from which Kant's critique may rightly be said to suffer, would be fundamentally unsatisfactory and would therefore be rejected:

Precisely here lies the source of all the misunderstanding that runs through all that has been said for and against the reality of spirit appearances. The fact is, namely, that the appearance of a spirit presents itself completely like the appearance of a physical body. Yet it is not and should not [be so taken]... For the point is to realize that an influence like that produced by a body does not necessarily require the presence of a body.<sup>529</sup>

Schopenhauer replies to Kant's misguided "spiritualistic" explanation with his own explanation for spirit appearances, which rests on his metaphysics of will:

However, in any case, as the thing in itself, which manifests itself in the appearance of an outer world, differs from it *toto genere* [utterly and completely], there may be an analogous relationship with that which manifests itself in the case of a spirit appearance. Indeed, what makes itself known in both could in the end be the same thing, namely, will.<sup>530</sup>

According to Schopenhauer's own "idealistic explanation" of spirit appearances, spirits would exert influence on a seer like Swedenborg by virtue of their will. Such a magical influence is foreseen *a priori* in the framework of Schopenhauer's metaphysics of Will, since Will has indeed already produced all physical appearances as its "objectifications," so that

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<sup>528</sup> Ibid., p. 317 f.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid., p. 249 f.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

in the case of spirit appearances it could also bring these into being in just the same way. In so doing Will, as “thing in itself,” would not be restricted by the limitations of the *principii individuationis*, Space, Time, and Causality.

As an analog to the spirit appearances of a “seer” like Swedenborg Schopenhauer adduces the normal dream, in which

can arise in our observing intellect, or brain, visual images which are completely and indistinguishably like those which are occasioned in that very place by the presence of the body affecting the external senses, without this influence.<sup>531</sup>

However, while in the normal dream the visions found their origin in the dreaming subject himself, the sights of a clairvoyant like Swedenborg would be determined by Will as “thing in itself.” For the will of a person possesses “a metaphysical essence by virtue of which he cannot be destroyed by death.”<sup>532</sup>

A deceased person could appear to living persons in his metaphysical substantiality as Will:

Simply by dint of this magical power, therefore, he could if necessary even now do the very thing he was possibly also adept at in life, namely, producing *actio in distans* [action at a distance], and in so doing exert influence directly on others without any physical medium. In the process it would be affecting their organism in the way that observable forms must present themselves to their brain, as they usually are produced only as a result of external influences on the senses.<sup>533</sup>

The will of a dead person could even, through *actio in distans*, move objects by means of its “magical power” still also vested in him in death:

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid., p. 333.

Yes, since this influence is conceivable only as a magical accomplishment, i.e., as brought about by the inner essence of the thing, which is identical in all, thus by *natura naturans* [creating Nature], were it thereby only to save the honor of estimable reporters, we could if need be, as a step not utterly and completely impossible to grant, still venture to risk not limiting this influence to human organisms, but also to non-living and therefore inorganic bodies that could thus be moved by it.<sup>534</sup>

The spirit appearances brought about by "Will" as "thing in itself" exert an influence, according to Schopenhauer's parapsychological theory, on the so-called "dream organ," as he refers to the inner sense. This "dream organ," affected from within by Will as "thing in itself," would then project into space visions and apparitions, so that the seer could not differentiate the appearances before him from "real" objects:

According to this everything seen through the dream organism is the activity of the observing function of the brain, aroused by inner impressions instead of, as is usually the case, by outer ones. That such a vision, even if it concerns external, indeed, distant things, could nevertheless have objective reality and truth is a fact whose explanation still could be attempted only in a metaphysical way, namely, by limiting all individuation and separation to the appearance, as opposed to relating it to the thing in itself.

The dream organism described here, however, as fully explained above, is that through which somnambulant observation, clairvoyance, second-sight (*déjà vu*), and visions of every kind take place.<sup>535</sup>

That Schopenhauer by way of an example for his "idealistic explanation" here cites not Swedenborg, whom Kant has unjustly criticized, but rather the Seer of Provost, probably derives from the fact that the latter had been carefully observed over a long period of time by Justinus Kerner,

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<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 333.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 271, 274.

while no one had witnessed Swedenborg experiencing his “spirit contacts”:

Yes, what is more, an explicit confirmation of the same viewpoint is given by the following statement of the most famous and carefully observed spirit seer, namely, the Seer of Prevorst: “Whether the spirits could make themselves visible only under this form or whether my eye can see them only under this form and my mind can conceive of them only so, whether for a spirit’s eye they would not be spirits, this I cannot maintain with certainty, but I almost think so.” Is this not entirely analogous to the Kantian teaching, “What the thing in itself may be, we do not know, we only know its appearances.”<sup>536</sup>

Here Schopenhauer attempts to guard against a misunderstanding, a misunderstanding from which Kant suffered in his Swedenborg review. Not everything that a spirit-seer glimpses in the intelligible spirit kingdom must be taken literally. The subjective part of the seer in his vision of the other side is to be taken into account and abstracted in evaluating his description of it, if one is to track down the truth. Schopenhauer therefore separates—quite in keeping with parapsychological methodology—a seer’s unexaminable visions of the other side from his verifiable, paranormally acquired information on this side.

In regard to Swedenborg’s gift of seership it can be established that Schopenhauer’s “idealistic explanation” of “visions” does more justice to the facts of the matter than Kant’s rightly criticized “spiritualistic explanation.” For Swedenborg had never claimed that the “spirits” appeared to him physically, or had exercised any locomotive influence in space. On the contrary, he allegedly perceived them through his inner mind, “which was opened for him by the Lord.”<sup>537</sup>

Schopenhauer’s fundamental thought in his explanation of occult phenomena is therefore his metaphysical conviction that besides the natural causal connection between the appearances of this world

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<sup>536</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>537</sup> Cf. the introductory quotation from Swedenborg in the “Leading Thoughts.”

there must be, going through the essence in itself of all things, still another...as it were underworldly connection, by virtue of which, from one point of the appearance outward, there could be an effect on every other, through a metaphysical nexus; that accordingly instead of the usual effect from without an effect on things from within must be possible, an effect of the appearance on the appearance, by virtue of the essence in itself, which is one and the same in all appearances...and that, as in somnambulant clairvoyance there is a suspension of the individual isolation of cognition, there could also be a suspension of the individual isolation of Will.<sup>538</sup>

So therefore, as the individual isolation of cognition would be suspended in the case of the occult phenomenon of *visio in distans* (sight at a distance), the same would happen in the case of the magical phenomenon of *actio in distans* (action at a distance) with the individual isolation of Will:

To find the way to break the isolation in which Will finds itself in every individual, to achieve an enlargement of the direct sphere of Will over the own body of the one wanting—that was the task of magic.<sup>539</sup>

In all these occult phenomena the most general and purely formal laws of nature would be abrogated in favor of an original order lying deeper, in which

time and space no longer separate the individuals and the separation and isolation based in just these forms no longer places insuperable limits on the communication of thoughts and on the direct influence of Will.<sup>540</sup>

Therefore, according to Kant's belief entirely all occult phenomena of the category *actio et visio in distans*—thought transference, clairvoyance,

<sup>538</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, "Animalischer Magnetismus und Magie," in *Über den Willen in der Natur* (Frankfurt, text of Zürich edition, 1836), Vol. V, p. 306.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>540</sup> Schopenhauer, "Versuch über Geistersehen," p. 289.

prophecy, spirit-seeing, and magic—occur by means of the solitary, normally isolated individual's participation in the metaphysical Will. He is thus of the opinion that the origin of this belief in occult phenomena, so universal in all mankind—a belief that is indeed ineradicable in spite of so much opposing experience and plebeian human understanding—is to be looked for at great depths

namely in the inner feeling of the omnipotence of Will in itself, of that Will which is the inner essence of man and likewise of the whole of nature, and in the associated presupposition that that omnipotence could at some time, in some way, from the *individuo* outward, assert itself.<sup>541</sup>

Fundamental to his parapsychological theory is the principle that these “magical influences” from that transcendent world into the world of appearance must take place without a transfer medium. Matter does not come into consideration as a vehicle of occult phenomena, for it would “only begin to exert an influence after its arrival, thus only on contact, consequently not at a distance.”<sup>542</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> “Animalischer Magnetismus und Magie,” p. 306.

<sup>542</sup> Schopenhauer, “Versuch über Geistersehen,” p. 290. At this point it might be mentioned that modern scientists like J. L. Mackie no longer exclude the possibility of a suprasensuous causal connection, but expressly incorporate it in their scientific concepts:

Coherent cause-effect complexes naturally suit us best, and we find the idea of an action at a distance across a spatial and temporal chasm confusing. Our customary understanding of causality is not inseparably conjoined with the concept of continuity, of direct connections. It is not necessarily a component of our idea of causality, and consequently a statement like “C causes E across a spatial as well as a temporal chasm without connecting links” would not be a contradiction. (L. J. Mackie: “The Cement of the Universe,” Oxford 1974, in: Rupert Sheldrake, *Das schöpferische Universum. Die Theorie des morphogenetischen Feldes*, München 1984, p. 90).

Neither, as M. B. Hesse explains, would there be any objection in principle from scientific theory against the assumption of such action at a distance:

Scientific theory presupposes no specific mode of causal connection between occurrences. It simply requires that it must be possible to discover laws and hypotheses which are expressible in concepts of some kind of model and satisfy the criteria of being capable of being understood, proved and falsified. The mode of a causal connection in the present case is indicated by the model and varies with a fundamental change of the model (M.B. Hesse, “Forces and Fields,” London 1961, in Rupert Sheldrake, *Das schöpferische Universum. Die Theorie des morphogenetischen Feldes*, p. 91).

In the case of Schopenhauer's assumption of “visio et actio in distans,” therefore, it would not be a matter of a complete abrogation of the principle of causality, but of a different epistemological model of causal action than in Kant's table of categories.

Just as Schopenhauer rejects the possibility of a material transfer medium, he rejects Mesmer's hypothesis of an "all-pervading world ether," the "membranous exhalation [*Hautausdünstung*] of the magnetizer" hypothesized by Stieglitz or, too, the widely held hypothesis of a so-called "nerve spirit."<sup>543</sup>

In this striking passage on the influence of extrasensory activities coming in upon the world of visual ideas we must distinguish between the performance of acts of extrasensory cognition and will and their emergence in the world of appearance. The "results" of extrasensory perception and action at a distance are always perceptible first, since their consequences, perhaps visions and magical effects, are as ever, of course, found within the normal structure of the field of observation, thus within space and time. The actual occult accomplishment of that transcendental *visio et actio in distans* itself, however, naturally cannot be viewed either directly or indirectly—shall we say *intellectually*—and thus remains fundamentally beyond human access. It is precisely occult!

On this account Kant had to reject the sensorially perceptible emergence of this kind of occult phenomena *a priori*, in fact, he flatly and categorically disallowed them. He had to do this since otherwise in a consistent continuation from this point he would also have been compelled to accept the occult interaction between two objects lying on the other side of the pure forms of observation and concepts of understanding. For within his critical cognitive system, which remains limited entirely to matters of sensation and understanding, such an occult relation between objects would of course lack any possibility of explanation for him

That in spite of this Kant admitted such an occult interaction between the intelligible and the sensible world in the framework of his moral philosophy—an interaction which is just as unexplainable as Schopenhauer's *qualitates occultae* and which just as with occult phenomena must be found outside the concepts of space-time causality—is a matter I will elucidate from Schopenhauer's perspective in the following section.

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<sup>543</sup> Cf. Schopenhauer, "Animalischer Magnetismus und Magie," p. 294.

In Schopenhauer's opinion the learned world's one-sided view repudiating occult phenomena had to make room for serious and scientific research on this broad, dark, and interesting field. According to Schopenhauer's conception what initiated this shift in paradigm in occult research, which appears in its new formulation by Hans Driesch under the scientific designation "parapsychology,"<sup>544</sup> had to be the "Copernican revolution" in philosophy brought about by Kant himself:

If our natural mode of cognition were of such a nature that it directly presented the thing in itself to us, and consequently the absolutely true relations and connections of things, then we would certainly be justified in rejecting *a priori* and unconditionally all preknowledge of the future, all appearances of those distant from us, or dying, or quite dead, and all magical influence.<sup>545</sup>

Because of our ignorance of the "world in itself" he regards Kant's hasty dismissal of Swedenborg's mediumship as an unjustified presumptuousness of reason:

If, however, as Kant teaches, what we know are merely appearances, whose forms and laws do not apply to things in themselves, such a rejection is plainly precipitous, since it is based on laws whose *a priori* significance it strictly limits to appearances. The thing in itself, on the other hand, to which our own inner self must also belong, it leaves unaffected by them.<sup>546</sup>

In a close imitation of Kant's differentiation between "thing in itself," which Schopenhauer conceives of as the "will to live," and the sensorially perceptible world of appearance Schopenhauer explains occult phenomena as visible effects of an unknown "world in itself," which could possibly be discovered through parapsychological research. For the "things in themselves"

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<sup>544</sup>Hans Driesch, *Parapsychology* (Leipzig 1932, new edition Frankfurt a.M. 1984)

<sup>545</sup>Schopenhauer, "Animalischer Magnetismus und Magie," p. 304.

<sup>546</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 304.



could have relationships to us out of which the named events arise, about which the decision is therefore to be awaited, not anticipated."<sup>547</sup>

To Kant's skeptical motto, "*A non posse ad non esse!*" [From impossibility to unreality] Schopenhauer replies with the principle of experimental science, "*Ab esse ad posse!*" [From reality to possibility].<sup>548</sup>

## II.2.2. Kant's Moral Philosophy as Occult Phenomena in the Framework of Schopenhauer's Metaphysics of Will

To prevent possible misunderstandings let it be premised at this point that I want to bring the two philosophical systems of Kant and Schopenhauer face to face exclusively in respect to the question of freedom. Their incommensurability in other areas remains untouched by my comparison.

In making this comparison I am quite aware that such a confrontation of two distinct philosophical systems is fundamentally problematic, since they proceed from quite different premises. So with Schopenhauer there is no "intelligible world" in the Kantian sense, there is only the sharp division between the world of appearance relating to the "world as idea" and the "thing in itself" relating to the "world as Will." In Schopenhauer's metaphysics, consequently, just that area is lacking within which in Kant's system the only systemically possible slot for the existence of occult phenomena remains open.

In the foregoing section it has already become evident that Schopenhauer presupposes the existence of occult phenomena *a priori* and even adjudges their actual discovery to be factual confirmations of his doctrine of the Will as the "thing in itself of the world."

In the following I shall investigate whether Kant's moral law and the freedom of the will associated with it, which I have of course made analogous to occult phenomena, could find their place in the system of Schopenhauer's metaphysics of Will.

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<sup>547</sup> Ibid., p. 304.

<sup>548</sup> Schopenhauer, "Versuch über Geistersehen," p. 326.

That Kant, for the sake of the realization of the moral law (acting from duty), relegates his “intelligible” freedom, which it was necessary to postulate and which was derived from the moral law, to the place of occult phenomena, since it had to work its way from that intelligible world of reason into the fixed and determined world of appearance in mysterious ways, Kant was himself certainly very well aware in his CPrR. The moral law, he says, furnishes us with an

unexplainable fact, which points to a world of pure understanding, indeed, it quite fully and exactly defines it and permits us know something about it, namely, a law. This law must furnish the world of the senses, as a perceptible Nature (as far as regards the rational being), with the form of a world belonging to the understanding, i.e., a Nature above the senses—without, however, injuring its mechanism.<sup>549</sup>

This moral law, issuing from that intelligible world, should come into and exert an influence on the causally determined world of appearance, without disturbing its space-time causality continuum.

However, an effect (freedom in moral actions) is not explainable if its cause remains unknown, that is to say, remains hidden in the intelligible world.<sup>550</sup>

Kant, suspecting, to be sure, that *practical reason* here threatens to overrun the bounds set in the theoretical use of reason, does not trouble himself, however, with an explanation of these manifestly mysterious, occult phenomena.<sup>551</sup>

In the attempt to unite natural necessity with freedom Kant assumes two distinct categories of causes: first, the “empirical character” of all appearances, which is given by the general application of the principle of causality; but second, the “intelligible character” of such experiences, which have their cause in the intelligible world, thus the free, moral actions done from duty in face of the categorical imperative:

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<sup>549</sup> Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, (1788) A 74.

<sup>550</sup> Cf. chap. I.6, “Kant’s Antithesis...”

<sup>551</sup> Cf. Kant, *Kritik der praktische Vernunft*, A 87 f.

One could call the first the character of such a thing in the appearance, the second the character of the thing in itself.<sup>552</sup>

Yet why then should the influence of an “intelligible character” refer only to moral determinations of “the thing in itself” in the “intelligible world’s” mode of operation? Under this concept of the “intelligible character” why could there not be included occult interactions between that “intelligible world” and our sensibly perceptible world of appearance, such as the Schopenhauerian *visio et actio in distans*?

Does not consciousness of the moral law in Kant’s moral doctrine act from that intelligible world upon our world of appearance in an analogous way to Schopenhauer’s *visio et actio in distans*? Kant here gets himself involved in an inconsistency inherent in the system. He does this in that on the one side, in the case of the call of conscience as a fact of pure reason as well as in the case of intelligible freedom (acting from duty), he allows a plainly occult penetration of the intelligible character into the thoroughly determined empirical character of the occurrences in the world of appearance, but on the other side he wants to exclude *a priori* the analogous effects of extrasensorial acts of cognition and will in the form of *visio et actio in distans*. This inconsistency Schopenhauer now eliminates with his differently constructed philosophy.

In this metaphysics of Will, the occult phenomena *visio et actio in distans* as *qualitates occultae*, i.e., as direct expressions of the metaphysical will, receive their *a priori* place. According to Schopenhauer’s conception the metaphysical Will to Live is capable of objectifying itself on the one hand in the fixed powers of nature and of life all the way down to the individual character in the human race, but then on the other too in the appearance of occult phenomena, *visio et actio in distans*, since indeed every individual in spite of his being bound up in the *principium individuationis* still has direct access to the metaphysical Will. From Schopenhauer’s metaphysical perspective the knowledge and realization of the Kantian “facts of pure reason” and practical freedom appear in this perspective only as a special case of a general capability of the individual, to transcend

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<sup>552</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 567.

the limits of his individuation in favor of his participation in the “thing in itself.”

Both kinds of occult phenomena within Kant’s moral philosophy, *visio et actio in distans* as well as also the equally mysterious consciousness of the moral law and its occult realization in the world of appearance would find their *a priori* locus in the frame of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics of Will as so-called *qualitates occultae*, as direct, original, not further explainable expressions of the metaphysical “Will.”

In fact, Schopenhauer argues in his Kant critique, in Kant’s philosophy the core question of human freedom also turns out to be a unique goal of Will as the “thing in itself”:

As this thing in itself, in this case man’s will is proposed (which Kant quite inadmissibly violating all customary linguistic usage in incomparable fashion, titles reason), appealing to an unconditional sense of obligation, the *categorical imperative*, which is postulated without further ado.<sup>553</sup>

Schopenhauer further assumes that Kant, “whenever he spoke of the thing in itself, in the darkest depths of his spirit was all the time vaguely thinking “Will.”<sup>554</sup>

Just as did Kant, Schopenhauer too in his ethics strictly separates man’s empirical from his intelligible character. Just as with Kant, “the complete empirical reality of the world of experience exists together with its transcendental ideality; just as the strict empirical necessity of the action exists together with its transcendental freedom.”<sup>555</sup>

In any case the shared concept “intelligible character” has a very different meaning with Kant than with Schopenhauer. With Kant it means the possibility of freedom if the individual complies with the general intelligible character of reason from a sense of duty. With Schopenhauer on the other hand the intelligible character for every single individual stands *a priori* unchangeably firm, but is different with each individual.<sup>556</sup>

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<sup>553</sup> Schopenhauer, *Kritik der Kantischen Philosophie*, p. 617.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 616.

<sup>555</sup> Schopenhauer, “Preissschrift über die Freiheit des Willens” (Drontheim: 1839, text of *Zürcher Ausgabe*), Vol. VI, p. 136 f.

<sup>556</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 137 f.

Just as with Schopenhauer the intelligible, individual character is to be regarded as *qualitas occulta*, so with Kant the general fact of reason is to be regarded as occult quality. For neither are governed by the space-time-causality continuum but are rooted directly in the metaphysical realm—in an “intelligible world” for Kant, in the “thing in itself” for Schopenhauer (since in Schopenhauer’s philosophy this differentiation between “thing in itself” and “intelligible world” established by Kant cannot be carried through).

But while in the Kantian epistemology there now remains in principle no room for occult qualities and occult phenomena—so that the consciousness of moral law as well as the associated idea of freedom would remain unexplained, yes, according to Kant’s rejection of occult phenomena would *a priori* fundamentally even be impossible occult qualities—the different metaphysics of Schopenhauer offers a possibility for the contradiction-free existence of occult phenomena as occult qualities in general and for the possibility of the Kantian moral doctrine as a special form of occult qualities in particular. Therefore in order to give the Kantian moral doctrine an explanation, which Kant himself still owes, one must add the Schopenhauerian metaphysics of Will to the Kantian system. Only so can Kantian moral philosophy be brought into harmony with his restrictive epistemology.

Thus in Schopenhauer’s metaphysics, for man, as the highest objectification of the Will to Live, through participation in that metaphysical Will there is possible in the exceptional case a mode of cognition and action that by-passes the *principium individuationis* (space, time, and causality). This extra-sensory mode of perception and action manifests itself in our idea world, according to Schopenhauer, in the form of occult phenomena like clairvoyance, prophecy, magic, and spirit-seeing, but since it is the most original, it can basically be regarded as its most natural, expression of the metaphysical Will. For Schopenhauer occult phenomena assume the status of experimental metaphysics. If “through avoidance of the *principium individuationis*,” we now succeed but one time “in approaching things from a totally different side and in a totally different way, namely directly from within, instead of merely from without, and we thus succeed in taking hold of these, knowingly in clairvoyance, and actively in magic,”<sup>557</sup>

<sup>557</sup> Schopenhauer, “Versuch über Geistersehn und was damit zusammenhängt, p. 327.

then through clairvoyance the Kantian doctrine of the ideality of space, of time, and of causality, as well as—especially through magic—Schopenhauer’s own doctrine “of the sole reality of Will as the core of all things,”<sup>558</sup> receives its confirmation.

For according to Schopenhauer the occult phenomena of “*visio et actio in distans*” prove that space, time and causality simply do not exist independently of us, since these phenomena apparently penetrate or transcend the space-time-causality continuum.

Quite simply, as a result of his metaphysical construction there is the possibility of leaving behind the *principium individuationis* already during lifetime—something which Kant in his controversy with Swedenborg had explained to be impossible in principle. It was only in the soul’s bodiless state after physical death that Kant in his lectures on rational psychology had not *a priori* excluded this possibility of an intellectual mode of observation.<sup>559</sup>

## II.3 SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND CRITIQUE

### II.3.1 Summary of Results of Part II

Schopenhauer proceeds from the following metaphysical principles in his philosophical explanation of occult phenomena:

1. Will as the “thing in itself” is *acting* and, in its objectification as intellect, *knowing*. In the world of appearance its acting as well as its knowing is limited by the law of causality and the *principium individuationis*, Space and Time, i.e., by the conditions under which alone all independent individuality is possible.
2. Therefore all human action and knowing is also merely conditional, mediate. Certainly Will, in spite of its entering into the appearance, remains independent of all bounds of individual existence, therefore also free of the limitations of individual and intellectual knowing: it is all-mighty, all-seeing, all-knowing.

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<sup>558</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>559</sup> Cf. die Erörterung von Kants Vorlesungen über die rationale Psychologie, Part 1, Chapter 7.2.

3. Man belongs to the inner essence of the world, he is a part of it. Accordingly, in principle nothing stands in the way of the assumption that, bypassing the *principium individuationis*, he certainly could act directly on nature and his fellow men from his inner being, from Will as "thing in itself," thus from within outward, and could know all things directly—in other words, that he too could be all-mighty, all-seeing and all-knowing, like the Will or "God who dwells within his breast."
4. Supposing now that this possibility were to become a reality in the form of *visio et actio in distans*, in this case we would be given a confirmation of the two cardinal truths, namely, that that which is active in the world and thus real, is alone Will, and that space, time, and causality do not affect it, and consequently that they belong to the world of idea alone.
5. If we are all-seeing and all-knowing, there is no past and no future for us, and just as little a Moving on and a Becoming, therefore no time, no space, no causality. For as soon as our knowing takes another way than the usual one from outside, via space and time as forms of our intellect, that is to say, the inward path, from the Real outward, we do not gain knowledge by means of these forms, but we comprehend all these things immediately in a single glance.
6. Such a confirmation of metaphysical truths by the factually demonstrable existence of *visio et actio in distans* would be practical metaphysics or "experimental metaphysics."
7. Also, the consciousness of the moral law as a "fact of pure reason" as well as the idea of freedom in Kant's doctrine of morality would appear in the world of the senses as occult phenomena.
8. In Schopenhauer's metaphysics both extrasensory perceptions from the outside world on the subject (*visio in distans*) and extrasensory influences by the subject on the outside world (*actio in distans*), as well as contacts with spirits such as Swedenborg and the Seer of Prevorst allegedly carried on, would be possible without a transfer medium.<sup>560</sup> The possibility of occult phenomena taking place by means of an immaterial transfer medium like some sort of "world ether" or "nerve

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<sup>560</sup> As per the classes given in the Introduction these are OC 1, OC 2 and OC 3 in the possibility category OC A.

spirit," as well as the possibility of a material transfer as taking place by means of something like an infinitely rapid activity Schopenhauer rejects, since for him Will as the "thing in itself" can act into the world of appearance in direct ways.<sup>561</sup>

9. In the framework of Schopenhauer's parapsychological theory, which rests on his metaphysics of Will, Swedenborg's gift of seership would also find an "idealistic explanation," after the "spiritualistic explanation" given by Kant in his *Dreams* has been validly critiqued.
10. Above and beyond Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation of occult phenomena, within his metaphysics of Will one could further assume the plane of existence of a "spirit kingdom," in order to guaranty the eternal existence of his "ideas."<sup>562</sup> This intelligible world of "pure subjects," who would perceive the pure objectifications of Will ("ideas") in an intellectual mode of observation could possibly be identified with the "intelligible world" of Kant. Thereby Swedenborg and occult phenomena as well as the Kantian moral philosophy could be fit into the same plane of existence in both philosophical systems, in the "intelligible world" between the "thing in itself" and the world of appearance. Through the assumption of such a "spirit world" in the framework of the "intelligible world" the philosophical systems of both philosophers would offer more room to occult phenomena than their creators themselves realized.

### II.3.2 Critique of Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation of occult phenomena

In Schopenhauer's handling of occult phenomena the following essential points are to be criticized:

1. The pure forms of observation and categories are to be sure only subjective conditions of the possibility of cognition, not objective determinations of the "thing in itself," as Schopenhauer quite correctly explains.

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<sup>561</sup>According to the introduction these are possibility categories OC B and OC C.

<sup>562</sup>Cf. the discussion of Schopenhauer's metaphysics in Chapter II.1.



But it is precisely through this transcendental idealism that these pure forms of cognition are strictly generally valid and necessary, and thus unimaginable apart from cognition, as Kant repeatedly emphasizes in the CPR. Now if on the basis of the subjectivity of the Kantian forms of cognition Schopenhauer wants to make a judgment about whether they can be eliminated, then he misunderstands Kant here fundamentally. For the fact is that Kant wanted to guarantee the empirical reality of all appearances precisely through his transcendental idealism. But this can succeed only under the premise that the subjective forms of cognition are fundamentally unavoidable, i.e., if the capability of an "intellectual mode of observation" is in principle precluded. In Schopenhauer's system *visio et actio in distans* is possible, indeed it even results unavoidably from his metaphysical premises (on account of man's inner participation in the "will to live"), but he cannot justify these occult phenomena with Kant's transcendental idealism.

From the discussion in the first part it should already be clear that Kant's limitation of the human capability of cognition and action can only assume the status of postulates. Kant was incapable of proving his postulates of cognition empirically, since these were in fact supposed to be precisely the conditions for the possibility of experience. On account of their historical dependency Kant's *a priori* stipulations for the possibility of cognition are in principle unprovable.

Schopenhauer is therefore rightly entitled in replacing the Kantian postulates of cognition with his own. The fact that Schopenhauer assesses occult phenomena precisely as factual proof of his metaphysics of Will shows that in the case of "Swedenborg and occult phenomena" it is precisely a matter of the central place of the two ontologies of epistemology.

In any case it is noteworthy that Kant himself in the framework of his moral philosophy has gone beyond his own theoretical bounds he so carefully laid out in his CPR, otherwise his whole moral doctrine would not function. And it is precisely on this enigmatic point that Kant's moral doctrine can be interpreted from Schopenhauer's perspective as occult phenomena, for in the latter's metaphysics occult interactions of such a kind with an "intelligible world" are projected from the beginning. With the aid of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, therefore, one could close the gap

in Kant's philosophy, by conceiving Kant's morally determined intelligible character as occult phenomena. But then not only does consciousness of the moral law and freedom become possible, but at the same time all remaining occult phenomena of *visio et actio in distans* too, and thereby Swedenborg's gift of seership as well.

Strangely enough, nevertheless, Schopenhauer himself does not see this possibility of a direct engagement of the metaphysical Will in the outline of his own ethics, for according to his conception the intelligible character of the individual is laid down once and for all by the metaphysical Will and remains determined in the world of appearance throughout the entire life. So the strange paradox presents itself that in Kant man is regarded as free in every action, which in respect to causal determination must in the framework of his epistemology be regarded as occult, while on the other side in Schopenhauer man is to be regarded as free only in regard to his metaphysical being, but as to his material actions he is to be at all times regarded as determined—although he fundamentally grants the possibility of a conditional, direct influence of the metaphysical Will in the form of *visio et actio in distans*.

2. The fundamental question to be put to Schopenhauer is whether and how far metaphysics can be proved by experience, since he certainly maintains that occult phenomena—about which, moreover, he himself has not the least doubt—could by their factual demonstration be valued as experimental metaphysics, therefore proving the reality of Will as the "thing in itself."

Fundamentally, every possible experience is preceded by a metaphysical or transcendental concept within which this experience—at least as to its form—is first at all possible. But then on the other hand, this experience does not permit any exact inference concerning the *a priori* axioms that underlie it, since it of course first receives value and significance within this *a priori* pattern of meaning. Experience, therefore, is never possible as "pure experience," independent of theory. It rather first manifests itself within a system of definite *a priori* stipulations, which as epistemological premises must be arrived at in pre-rational ways. This is explained by Kurt Hübner as follows:

Here as there it is a matter of the individual fact being seen only in the light of a theory. It is "theory-dependent." And to such an extent a theory is therefore in fact "the condition of the possibility of experience." ...Every verification, every falsification, is consequently always somewhat hypothetical. Also, the logical schema of a confirmation consists herein, that the propositions that have been derived from assumed theories under specific conditions, be in agreement with the interpreted facts; but the confirmation of the derivation says, logically speaking, ...nothing about the confirmation of its premises—in our case the axiomatic fundamental propositions. They are, therefore, not capable of any direct empirical establishment, but must be constructed *a priori*.<sup>563</sup>

Therefore, if one says, "Theories can be confirmed or refuted empirically," this is but an elliptical mode of speaking. As far as their fundamental propositions go they are much more something made up and *a priori* in nature than they are, on the one hand, something that first makes experience possible and, on the other, not directly provable.<sup>564</sup>

Now, the fact that in the case of Schopenhauer's opinion of occult phenomena it is certainly not a matter of natural science but of a metaphysical system, fundamentally changes nothing in Kurt Hübner's discussion. In the following, by way of example, I want to apply Hübner's epistemology to Schopenhauer's metaphysics only in the case of axiomatic fundamental determinations. Since on one hand Schopenhauer puts *Will a priori* into his metaphysical theory as a fundamental proposition, on the other the factual discovery of occult phenomena cannot be valued as exact confirmations of his *a priori* fundamental proposition, if it happens to be claimed that the metaphysical Will is that which expresses itself in the occult phenomena of *visio et actio in distans*. Since in his *a priori* constructed world system the metaphysical "Will" had been set in place as the originator of *qualitates occultae* and therewith also of occult phenomena, the possible imperial discovery of *visio et actio in distans* cannot definitely

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<sup>563</sup> Kurt Hübner, *Kritik der wissenschaftlichen Vernunft* (Freiburg: 1979), p. 327 f.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

prove the *a priori* premise of Will as the thing in itself in which every individual has a part. A particular problem in Schopenhauer's metaphysics lies in the fact that he seeks to give plausibility to Will as "thing in itself" by way of common inner experience, namely, that of the inner sense of self-awareness and of the body in this direct awareness. Not until after this mental awaking to metaphysical reality does he claim its *a priori* nature, by transferring the personal will by analogy to all living beings and appearances of nature. Now since Schopenhauer's metaphysics is given its basis by reference to an inner experience, these could also be confirmed by specific experiences, if they made assertions *a priori* about the possibility of particular experiences. However, since from Schopenhauer's metaphysics one can derive *a priori* the possibility of occult assertions and influences, his metaphysics of Will could receive at least a certain confirmation through the factual evidence of occult phenomena and be furnished with a certain explanatory power. Seen in this way, therefore, occult phenomena relate to Schopenhauer's metaphysics of Will as a scientific record of data to a scientist. In retrospect one gets the impression that in order to be able to neatly close a gap in the foundation of his philosophical system Schopenhauer would have had to invent occult phenomena if he had not accidentally come upon their actual existence.

3. There is a further apparent inconsistency to be seen in Schopenhauer's proposition. In *visio et actio in distans* the individual is just as all-mighty, all-seeing and all-knowing as is the will in its role as "thing in itself." For this reason Schopenhauer emphasizes again and again in his *The World as Will and Idea* that the original Will to Live is at the beginning nothing more than a blind striving, a dark urge, and first succeeds in becoming awareness of itself—if it ever does—in the human intellect.

In the first place the predicate "all-knowing" is antithetical to dull ideas. Certainly the Will to Live on its highest level, that of human reason, is capable of being identified with all the rest of its appearances, but even if one grants a gradual consciousness to the Schopenhauerian Will in the human intellect, still going from this self-knowledge in the idea world to

being all-knowing would appear to be an essentially impossible leap.

Also, the question of how the metaphysical Will, which through its individuation had specifically forfeited power, is capable of finding its way back to its original omnipotence, remains incomprehensible in Schopenhauer's explanation of occult *visio et actio in distans*.

In any case there could be imagined an expansion of the realm of the individual willing and cognition within certain boundaries, which could for example be attached to the idea of species, thus the identification of Will's self-awareness in the human intellect with all its phenomena, but particularly with the individuals existing on the same level of objectification. Such a qualified expansion of the power and knowledge of the individual will above and beyond its individual isolation would possibly already be sufficient to explain *visio et actio in distans*.

4. A final point of criticism of Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation of occult phenomena consists in seeing that knowledge is in principle first possible in the realm of the *principii individuationis*, space, time and causality, thus first in the human intellect. But now in the case of *visio et actio in distans* just this *a priori* framework for the possibility of knowledge would be jumped over, seeing that the individual would have to terminate his isolation in favor of extrasensory modes of knowledge and influence by virtue of his participation in the metaphysical Will. However, if the individual were to forsake his isolation as a condition for the possibility of knowledge and influence, how then would acts of knowledge and influence be able to come at all to that, no longer existing, de-individualized Omnibeing?

The case would be then that besides the sensory mode of observing the world of appearance another intellectual mode of observing it would be possible for the individual, of seeing it as it is in itself. This possibility of an intellectual mode of observation (*intuitus originarius*) Kant explained as being original apprehension of sensory variety, not requiring a synthesis.<sup>565</sup>

This very capability of an intellectual mode of observation, like that

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<sup>565</sup> Cf. Kant, *CPR*, B 138f.

<sup>566</sup> Cf. Kant, *CPR*, B 72.

which Kant would only attribute to God,<sup>566</sup> Schopenhauer in his explanation of occult phenomena attributes to every individual human being by virtue of his participation in the metaphysical substratum, in fact by virtue of his inner sense, which he here refers to as the “dream organ.”

Through a reversal of the normal way of perception, therefore, the impressions received by means of the inner sense would be projected outwards into space. Through this action the objects of visions, etc. would be flowingly inserted into the world of ideas.

Magically the will of an individual would be transferred by a process analogous to this to another individual or even to objects by means of the inner being of a person who participates in the metaphysical substratum.

Therefore a puzzling interaction between the single individual and his metaphysical substratum would take place on the border of the “principal of individuation,” which again must on the whole be considered as an occult phenomenon.

In this German passage the closeness of Schopenhauer’s philosophy to that of Kant shows itself once again. For Kant too in his practical philosophy indeed also sharply distinguishes between man’s intelligible character and his sensorial nature; with Kant too the puzzling connection between theoretical and practical reason in the question of freedom remains a genuinely occult phenomenon.

In both philosophical systems man is regarded on the one hand as a purely sensorial individual, to whom on account of his isolation from all other individual beings only the world as idea, or the world of appearance, is accessible. But on the other hand, in both philosophies this isolated individual by virtue of his metaphysical being, or his intelligible character, has part in a transcendental sphere, whereby in addition to sensorial, also original, intellectual cognitions become possible for him—in Kant’s case moral awareness and the freedom of obeying it beyond what necessity requires, in the case of Schopenhauer, analogously, the quite fundamental capability of extrasensory modes of knowing and acting in the form of occult *visio et actio in distans*.

In this philosophical investigation the “seer” Swedenborg shows himself to have the roll of a *Grenzgänger*—a worker whose home and employment are on different sides of a border—not only between this world and the next, but also between the opposing philosophical positions of Kant

and Schopenhauer. In Swedenborg and the phenomena of the occult the central difference between both philosophical systems can be strikingly shown. In Kantian epistemology access to the other world is in principle closed, although paradoxically in the course of Kantian moral philosophy such an access to the "intelligible world" appears to open. In Schopenhauer's metaphysics of Will likewise, Swedenborg's extrasensory gift of seership as well the Kantian moral law can be classified as occult phenomena (*qualitates occultae*): here a systematic *a priori* structure is given for both kinds of occult phenomena. □

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### Abbreviations

"*Träume e. G.*" or "*Träume*" = Immanuel Kant: *Träume eines Geisters ehers erlautert durch Träume der Metaphysik*, Königsberg 1766.

CPR = Immanuel Kant: *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Riga 1781 / 1787.

CPrR = Immanuel Kant: *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Riga 1788.

Text within square brackets [ ] has been added by me if so indicated in the footnote.

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