

New Perspective on Schopenhauer's Ontology of Will*

by Dennis Vanden Auweele (Leuven)

It was as though my mire were my most normal condition,
And not in the least disease or depravity,
So that at last all desire in me to struggle against
This depravity passed.

F. Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, Part I, Chapter II

When Arthur Schopenhauer¹ published his *magnum opus* *The World as Will and Representation* (1819), he claimed to be the first Western philosopher who exposed the 'hidden essence' of the world as voracious, self-expressive will (*Wille*). Accordingly, he proposed a completely different path than the one "all philosophers before [him had] taken" (W I, 118) who invalidly extended reasoning according to the principle of sufficient reason – which is "not an eternal truth" (W I, 38) – to the realm of the 'real', thereby failing to appreciate that the real is something "*toto genere* different from the *world as representation*" (W II, 216; Schopenhauer's emphasis) – a mistake first ascertained by Kant, although even he fell victim to dialectical illusion (W I, 200; 516). Accordingly, contemporary Schopenhauer-scholars tend to assume that Schopenhauer's notion of will – moreover, ontology of will – is not inspired by any previous philosophical sys-

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1 References to Schopenhauer's works are taken from the *Sämtliche Werke* edition by Arthur Hübscher. An abbreviation of the work will be followed by the page number: W I/II (*The World as Will and Representation*: Volume 1/2), FW (*Prize-essay on the Freedom of the Will*) and BM (*Prize-essay on the Basis of Morals*). The translation stems from the Cambridge Edition of *Schopenhauer's Works*. References to Kant's work are taken from the *Akademie Ausgabe*, and will be noted in the text by the number of the volume and the page. To avoid confusion, I will not use abbreviations for Kant's works. The relevant English translation is always taken from the Cambridge Edition of *Kant's Works*. See the bibliography for full details.

tem, despite all the respect Schopenhauer showered over Descartes, Locke and Kant. Christopher Janaway influentially notes that

[...] in the history of the concept of will, Schopenhauer's intervention is idiosyncratic and perturbing. He does not simply take a pre-existing conception and give it an unwonted importance; he takes the word *Wille* and proposes for it a use that is revolutionary and far from straightforward.²

Although Schopenhauer was clearly decisively influenced by (a particular reading of) Kant, scholars do not generally see this rubbing off on his notion of will. John Atwell writes: "Schopenhauer sharply distinguishes the will from the intellect, arguing again and again that the will is not cognitive or rational or intellectual, that there is no such thing as a 'rational will' (contrary to Kant)"³. Moreover, a number of scholars blame Schopenhauer for inviting misunderstanding by calling the essence of the world 'will', a term so metaphysically laden at a time dominated by German Idealism. Bryan Magee writes: "[Schopenhauer by choosing the name will] made inevitable the misunderstandings he is trying to ward off [...] Any innocuous name would have avoided it. The term 'force', rejected by him, would have been vastly preferable. 'Energy' would have been better still" (Magee, 1983, 143–144). Nevertheless, Schopenhauer adamantly insists on utilizing the term 'will', and assigns to it "a broader scope than it has had before". Moreover, he will necessarily be misunderstood if "anyone [thinks] that it is ultimately a matter of indifference whether the word will or some other word is used to designate the essence in itself of all appearance" (W I, 132)⁴.

We would therefore do well to caution against univocally divorcing Schopenhauer's concept of will from its philosophical history by investigating what particular concept of will Schopenhauer assigns a 'broader' scope to. In my view, this implies that we ought to trace Schopenhauer's use of the word 'will' back to Kant's philosophical namesake. Particularly, I will point to how Kant argues for a notion of depravity that radically takes root in the faculty of choice (*Willkür*) – which is a part of the faculty of desire (or *Wille*). This radical form of depravity paves the way for Schopenhauer's assessment of the inner essence of the world as pre-rational, voracious will. Although Kant entertains a twofold notion of

2 Janaway, in: Janaway 1999, 138.

3 Atwell 1995, 26. Cf. Magee 1983, 119 ff.; Wicks 2008, 53 ff.; Young 2005, 53 ff.

4 Julian Young joins Schopenhauer in his insistence on the term 'will' by opining that Schopenhauer uses this term as an extended reference, rather than extended meaning (Young 1987, 65 ff.). Similarly, G. S. Neeley argues that Schopenhauer uses 'will' as an incremental metaphor: "The subject which the metaphor identifies and describes can only be identified and described by means of a metaphor" (Neeley 2003, 66). Basically, the thing in itself is beyond the reach of meaningful language (since we lack 'perceptual verifiability') and can therefore only be described using a metaphor.

will, namely as ‘power of choice’ (*Willkür*) and ‘rational will’ (*Wille*), Schopenhauer will opt to ‘broaden the scope’ or ‘ontologize’⁵ solely Kant’s depraved power of choice. Through this, the normative appeal of the ‘rational will’ dwindles in Schopenhauer’s philosophy and the result is an all-powerful faculty of choice that self-expresses without the normative control and restraint offered by rationality. Accordingly, the late 19th century evolution to assess reality and its history as a voracious and blind happening (e. g. Nietzsche, Darwin) was already prepared by Kant’s notion of radical depravity – except that, obviously, for Kant there is still some equivocal form of ‘salvation’ from this ‘depravity’.

1. Kant’s Radically Depraved Power of Choice

Kant entertains a, sometimes implicit and sometimes explicit, distinction between what he calls a *Wille* and the *Willkür*⁶. He ascribes respectively a positive and a negative perspective on freedom to this ‘rational will’ (*Wille*) and ‘power of choice’ (*Willkür*). This dual perspective on freedom will form the basis to properly understand Kant’s notion of ‘radical evil’ (*Radikal Böse*) and how this solely infect the ‘power of choice’, not the ‘rational will’.

Kant divides the faculty of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*) or will (*Wille*) into a lower (*unter*) and a higher (*ober*) faculty. The lower faculty of desire is determined in accordance with material principles (happiness); the higher faculty of desire by formal principles (5:22–25). To put it differently, the lower faculty of desire is mediately determined through potential happiness in its object; the higher faculty is immediately determined through formal, a priori laws of reason. For morality to be objectively valid (*Groundwork* II) and operative (*Groundwork* III), Kant must warrant the claim that there is a higher faculty of desire that can work as a universally valid, normative principle of action for rational agents. While a lower faculty of desire appears to be a given (all animal beings ‘desire’), a higher faculty is only possible, according to Kant, given that the will is autonomous: “Freedom is the condition of the moral law and [...] the moral law is the condition under which we can first become aware of freedom” (5:4n,

5 I use the neologisms ‘to ontologize’ and ‘ontologization’ as shorthand for Schopenhauer’s broadening of the scope of the concept of will; more precisely, Schopenhauer’s broadening of Kant’s notion of the power of choice. While Kant only appropriates a free power of choice to rational agents, Schopenhauer turns this free power of choice into an ontological presupposition. In other words, Schopenhauer turns Kant’s transcendental anthropology into ontology.

6 Few scholars have been as helpful as Henry Allison in clarifying Kant’s use of the term will (*Wille*) as it is, especially throughout the 1780s, often abstrusely and confusedly used by Kant – Allison continued on the pioneering work of Lewis White Beck (1960, 29–42). By suggesting a twofold of theses, the reciprocity-thesis and the incorporation-thesis, Allison has cleared up a number of issues in Kant-interpretation (Allison 1990; 1996; cf. McCarty 1994).

cf. 4:440). This appears, however, to be at best paradoxical and at worst self-contradictory: on the one hand, there is a higher faculty of desire because the rational agent is free and, on the other hand, there is freedom because of the reality of the higher faculty of desire (i. e. the fact of reason of the moral law).

So as to resolve this paradox, we need to return to Kant's distinction between two types of freedom/autonomy in the first *Critique*. Although the terms *Willkür* and *Wille* will only be used consistently from the *Groundwork* on, Kant already elaborates on two different concepts of freedom when arguing for the possibility, and rational necessity, of a 'causality not determined by natural causes'. In the *Antinomy of Speculative Reason*, he clarifies that "by freedom in the cosmological sense, [he] understands the faculty of beginning a state from itself" (A 533/B 561) or, as it is better known, 'absolute spontaneity'. This kind of freedom coincides with our practical concept of freedom, namely as "the independence of the power of choice [*Willkür*] from necessitation by impulses of sensibility" (A 534/B 562). Here, Kant is characterizing the practical freedom of the power of choice (*Willkür*), not rational autonomy (*Wille*). Although this second type of autonomy is mostly defined in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*, Kant notes that when a human agent introspects, s/he finds him/herself to be "a merely intelligible object" (A 546/B 574) with two faculties, namely reason (*Vernunft*) and understanding (*Verstand*). Reason has, according to Kant, a causality of its own because of "imperatives that we propose as rules to our powers of execution in everything practical" (A 547/B 575). This already hints towards a second and relevantly different notion of freedom that is involved in practical agency. In conclusion, the human will is host to a twofold perspective on autonomy: the one being the content of moral agency (practical autonomy) and the other enabling the incorporation of this content⁷ (absolute spontaneity).

This twofold perspective on autonomy will be from the *Groundwork* on attributed to two aspects of the human will: the power of choice and the rational will. The 'power of choice' is host to absolute spontaneity; the rational will, or higher faculty of desire, spawns self-legislated, immutable laws. The power of choice should not be identified with the lower faculty of desire since this would undermine its absolute spontaneity. In the *Groundwork*, Kant describes the absolute spontaneity of the power of choice negatively as "a causality that [...]"

7 Henry Allison helpfully calls this the 'Incorporation-thesis' of Kant's theory of moral agency (1990, 5–6). The term is most likely derived from the few times that Kant uses the term 'incorporate into his maxim' (e. g. 6:24), and serves to reconcile the absolute spontaneity of the power of choice with an incentive determining human agency (motivational hedonism). Generally, Allison's point of view does seem to account – although likely anachronistically – for Kant's insistence on absolute freedom and motivational hedonism. Motivational hedonism is the theory that a human agent can only incorporate an action into its maxim if the action 'interests' him/her. Cf. McCarty 2009, 167 ff.

can be efficient independently of alien causes determining it” (4:446). According to Kant, this ‘negative’ concept leads to a positive one, namely “a causality in accordance with immutable laws of a special kind” (ibid.). Kant regrettably employs throughout the *Groundwork* the word will (*Wille*) to designate both forms of causality⁸. Kant might have opted to do so because he wanted to conceptually link both forms of causality: a human agent would then only be truly autonomous if s/he self-legislates practical laws – not when only undetermined by sensibility. A free will would be “be an absurdity [*Unding*]” if it solely implied absolute independence (ibid.). Schopenhauer, however, consistently derides this conclusion: “It is of course a manifest contradiction to call the will free and then to prescribe laws that it ought to will by: – ‘ought to will’ – wooden iron!” (W I, 320; cf. FW, 8–9, BM, 123, 195).

A recurring issue in Kant’s moral philosophy revolves around this positive concept of autonomy and the possibility of its operativity: e. g. “how is a categorical imperative possible” (4:453) or, “how pure reason can be practical” (4:459) or, “how freedom is possible” (4:459) or, “whether pure reason of itself alone suffices to determine the will” (5:15). Several of Kant’s more pessimistic statements about human nature and mankind seem to suggest that a pure moral intention while rationally necessary, it remains for any particular human agent impossible⁹. A few examples:

In *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*: “The human being feels within himself a powerful counterweight to all the commands of duty” (4:405).

In *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan point of view*: “One cannot resist feeling a certain indignation when one sees [the human being’s] doings and refrainings on the great stage of the world and finds that despite the wisdom appearing now and then in individual cases, everything in the lar-

8 Henry Allison notes that, despite Kant’s usage of will (*Wille*) for both forms of freedom, the distinction between the negatively free power of choice and the positively free rational will is implicitly present in Kant’s depiction of rational agency in *Groundwork* II (1990, 96). Certain scholars suggest, however, that Kant introduced the *Wille/Willkür* distinction after the *Groundwork* to account for a more robust sense of moral responsibility, since equating autonomy with morality might, unwillingly, excuse a moral wrongdoer for his/her crime by denying his/her ‘autonomy’ (Silber, 1960; Prauss 1983). Certain strong formulas of Kant in the *Groundwork*, such as “a free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same” (4:447), and the absence of the term *Willkür* do argue strongly for this latter point of view.

9 For discussion of Kant’s moral pessimism, cf. Frierson in: Anderson-Gold; Muchnik 2010, 33–57. I have elsewhere traced this pessimism back to Kant’s Lutheran/Pietist heritage (Vanden Auweele, 2013, 117–134). Kant appears strikingly pessimistic about the human agent’s natural aptitude towards the good on five accounts: the radicality of evil, the positive choice for evil, the inscrutability of freedom, the rejection of prudence for moral purposes and the rejection of moral sentimentalism (or, a natural appreciative feeling for morality).

ge is woven together out of folly, childish vanity, often also out of childish malice and the rage to destruction” (8:18).

In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*: “This [i. e. human nature] would then result in a caricature of our species that would warrant not mere good-natured laughter at it but contempt for what constitutes its character, and the admission that this race of terrestrial rational beings deserves no honourable place among the (to us unknown) other rational beings” (7:332–333).

In *Religion within the Boundaries of Bare Reason*: “Everything, however, even the most sublime object [i. e. the moral law] is diminished under the hands of human beings whenever they apply its idea to their use” (6:7–8) and: “The human being is by nature evil” (6:32).

In his legal philosophy, Kant appears rather optimistic about creating the necessary institutions to generate a lasting legal peace – both between individuals and nations: “Perpetual peace [...] is no empty idea but a task that, gradually solved, comes steadily closer to its goal” (8:386; cf. 6:124–137). This optimism, however, pertains only to legal and not moral peace: “The individual is never going to will what is required in order to realize that end leading towards perpetual peace” (8:371). Kant’s rigorist emphasis on the dutiful nature of moral laws could be explained by a certain concession he makes towards ‘religious ethics’ in his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, namely a secularized notion of original sin (*peccatum originarium*). According to Kant, the human power of choice (*Willkür*) is “by nature evil” (6:32) – not just evil, but radically so. Kant’s use of the term radical evil has been prone to misunderstanding as it could mislead the reader to think that Kant characterizes an occurrence of evil of astounding and mind-baffling magnitude, such as the Lisbon Earthquake (1755). Although Kant was ‘shocked’ by this epiphany of natural horror, his account of radical evil is more properly anthropological and mirrors to a large extent the traditional Christian conception of original sin.

An intention – the only thing that could accrue a moral predicate – is evil, according to Kant, then and then it is inclined to “subordinate the incentives of the moral law to others“, or, to “[reverse] the ethical order” (6:30). Accordingly, Kant refuses to diagnose natural inclinations in themselves as evil, on the contrary, they are predispositions to the good (6:26–28). Evil is not to be attributed to either a diabolical will that repudiates the moral law for the sake of repudiating it (or, choosing evil for the sake of evil) or the human agent succumbing to the temptation of natural pleasures and happiness. The former would entail “a corruption of the moral legislative reason (*Wille*)”, the latter that the natural inclinations “bear a [direct] relation to evil” (6:35). The latter would further imply that the human agent loses her negative freedom as overwhelmed by sensuous

inclinations, the former would imply that the human agent loses his/her positive freedom since the higher faculty of desire would no longer categorically demand moral duty to be held in the utmost respect. A human agent acts in an evil fashion by “[reversing] the moral order” (6:36), namely through freely giving priority to his/her interest in self-love over his/her duty to morality¹⁰.

Kant does not require of “formal proof” of “such a corrupt propensity rooted in the human being”, because he readily acknowledges “the multitude of woeful examples that the experience of human deeds parades before us” (6:33). To account for the possibility of these evil deeds, Kant argues that humanity has acquired a universal propensity – through some form of transcendental a-temporal inscrutable deed (6:31–32) – to prefer sensuous inclinations over the moral law. This propensity is radical because it “corrupts the ground of all maxims” and “cannot be extirpated through human forces” (6:37). In other words, it goes to the root (*radix*) of our power of choice. This corruption touches only, however, the power of choice, not the rational will. Kant’s secularized concept of original sin, although in a number of elements mimicking Luther’s notion of the human Fall, is not so radical that it extinguishes the natural light of reason to know the good. However, the human *natural* potency to be inclined to act morally seems to be completely overtaken by this corruption: the human being’s power of choice is not redolent of natural goodness. The higher faculty of desire is then enforcing a fairly trans-natural standard on a power of choice that is naturally disinclined to acquiesce to these moral laws.

To reiterate, Kant draws up a conceptual distinction between the negatively free power of choice (*Willkür*) and the positively free/autonomous rational will (*Wille*). He concedes that the former has been corrupted by a natural propensity to make poor use of this negative freedom: the power of choice is radically inclined to rank sensuous inclinations over the moral law. Kant explicitly denies the possibility of a “theological chiasm” (6:34) i. e. a state of complete moral peace. In the following, I will point out how Schopenhauer’s notion of will is a conceptual descendent of Kant’s radically depraved power of choice that has dispensed of the normative control of the rational will.

2. Schopenhauer’s Ontologization of Kant’s Power of Choice

The general consensus among commentators seems to be that while Schopenhauer’s epistemology extensively mimics Kant’s outlook on epistemology in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and *Logic* of the first *Critique*, these similarities do not rub off on Schopenhauer’s ontology and ethics. Schopenhauer himself, ho-

¹⁰ For a more comprehensive assessment of Kant’s analysis of evil agency, cf. Vanden Auweele 2012, 125–132.

wever, suggests that his ontology of will is “the correct conclusion of Kantian philosophy” (W II, 13). David Cartwright emphasizes to the contrary:

Schopenhauer’s allegiance to his Kantian heritage did not extend to Kant’s ethics. Unlike Kant’s theoretical philosophy, which Schopenhauer viewed as expressing some of the grandest insights ever produced by the human mind, he regarded Kant’s practical philosophy as an intellectual catastrophe, the unfortunate product of Kant’s love for architectonic symmetry, a rashness gained by Kant’s increasing philosophical reputation and the debilitating effects of old age.¹¹

We would, however, succumb to a naïve and one-sided reading of Schopenhauer’s philosophy should we not accept that Schopenhauer continues on Kant’s system of ethics after drawing important ontological and metaphysical conclusion. I will obviously not go so far as to suggest that Schopenhauer’s view of ethics based upon his recognition of the will as the primal instinctive drive behind all happening has specific counterparts in Kant’s ethics based upon a deontology of self-imposed duties of reason¹². I do, however, note a continuous philosophical project started by Kant and furthered/broadened by Schopenhauer. Kant argued that the human power of choice is radically disinclined to incorporate the moral law into its maxim for the sake of respect alone because of an original and inextirpable corruption. In Kant’s view, this corruption does not touch the legitimacy or validity of the moral law, although the law wanes in natural appeal¹³. When we continue this line of argumentation and broaden it beyond transcendental anthropology, Schopenhauer’s ontology of will and connected outlook on ethics is a natural conclusion.

11 Cartwright, in: Janaway 1999, 254. Cf. also Welsen 1999.

12 Schopenhauer himself counted Kant’s morality as a disaster, an attempt to apply his ‘grand theoretical insights’ to the domain of morality. Specifically, Kant’s ground for morality, i. e. the categorical imperative, rationality, duty, “sinks before our eyes into the deep abyss of philosophical errors that is perhaps impossible to fill – proving itself to be an inadmissible assumption and a mere dressing up of theological morals” (BM, 185).

13 On numerous occasions, Kant attempts to establish a more lively interest in morality through a variety of means. We have a duty to “cultivate and strengthen [our moral feeling] through wonder at its inscrutable source” (6:400; Kant’s emphasis). Kant believes that this cultivation can best be undertaken through some form of moral education that instills rational respect for the grandeur of moral agency (6:48). This ‘moral education’ is best taken up within a universal cosmopolitan proselyte rational church. One is not to “send forth wisdom against folly [...] [but summon] it against malice (of the human heart), which secretly undermines the disposition with soul-corrupting principles” (6:57). Accordingly, Kant emphasizes that one is not to prudentially appreciate morality as the best possible course of action, but as the only rationally valid and worthy course of action. In Kant’s view, a purified rational religion can work so to cultivate moral feeling by suggesting (1) a divine obligator of the moral laws, (2) good moral examples (idea of a Son of God), (3) the unification of humankind in a global, ethical community. For a good discussion of these, cf. Moors in: Palmquist 2010, 475–485.

First, I will enumerate a number of general characteristics of Schopenhauer's specific view of the will as the 'inner or hidden essence' of the world in itself (a). Then I will argue that this 'will' as underlying drive of all happening in the world is remarkably similar to the Kantian depraved power of choice if broadened beyond its anthropological basis. I substantiate this last point by making some comments about the decline of the normativity of rationality in Schopenhauer (b). This last point will be illustrated by some remarkable similarities between Schopenhauer's and Kant's respective conceptions of religious grace, and how this relates back to all previous points (c).

a) Schopenhauer's Ontology of Will

Although Schopenhauer warns against "[using] the forms of appearance [...] as a pole for vaulting over the appearances themselves [...] and landing in the boundless realm of empty fictions" (W I, 321), he does claim to have some insight into the 'inner essence' of the world in itself, declared beyond rational inquiry by Kant. Schopenhauer does this by extending an immediate familiarity with his own essence to the whole realm of being, even to non-rational and inorganic beings.

Schopenhauer opines that philosophers prior to him have let their investigations into the inner essence of the world be led by the principle of sufficient reason (*Satz vom Grunde*). This, however, is not 'an eternal truth' and "has merely a relative and conditional validity within appearances alone. As a result, the inner being of the world, the thing in itself, can never be discovered using this as our guide" (W I, 38). This is, in a nutshell, the strictures Kant has placed upon rational metaphysics: the forms of appearance (or, 'principle of sufficient reason') cannot be univocally applied to the 'in-itself'. The principle of sufficient reason – the subject of Schopenhauer's *Habilitationsschrift* – suggests that all things happen in accordance with a fourfold of a priori laws of consciousness: representations (becoming), concepts (knowing), space/time (being) and volition (motivation). As these laws of consciousness are valid only for the subjectively construed representational world, one can only (if at all) inquire into the essence of the world beyond appearance/representation through some form of cognition not based upon the principle of sufficient reason. To Schopenhauer, this means that the world-in-itself must be pre-rational (Young 2005, 68 ff.; Wicks 2008, 39 ff.). In his own view, Schopenhauer believes not to be opposing Kant's transcendental idealism, but the "incognizability of the thing in itself is modified to the extent of saying that [it] is not absolutely and fundamentally cognizable" (W II, 221). Accordingly, Schopenhauer eschews an absolute characterization of the thing in itself: "Inside it is dim, like a well blacked telescope: no a priori principle illuminates the night of its own interior" (FW 22). Only an ambiguous form of immediate acquaintance allows for a pathway towards the

inner essence of the world, namely through our own body as rooted in the world itself (W I, 118). Through this immediate acquaintance of our own body the hidden essence of the world has “for the most part cast off its veils”, it still does not emerge “entirely naked” (W II, 220)¹⁴.

The knowledge one has of his/her body is twofold, namely representational (my arm, my leg) and non-representational (desire, will). Because of this latter, Schopenhauer calls the body an “immediate object” or the “objecthood [*Objektivität*] of the will” (W I, 120). Thus, Schopenhauer suggests that introspection expounds the essence of a human being as will/desire/striving (cf. FW, 11–12) and not, as Descartes would have it, a ‘thinking thing’ (*une chose pensante*) – this immediate cognition is not *clair et distinct* but “obscure, dull, one-sided and direct” (FW, 26). Given this dual acquaintance with our body as both representation and will, one can assume (*annehmen*) two things: my body is given to me in two forms of cognition either because of a special relationship I have to it – a relationship I lack with other bodies – or because my body is unique. The latter, Schopenhauer calls, theoretical egoism or solipsism which is only “a skeptical

14 Julian Young influentially stresses this paragraph to counter the traditional metaphysical reading of Schopenhauer as a Kantian-styled dualist transcendental idealist that has found some loop hole into the noumenal realm: “How could a man who takes such relish in lampooning the idea of ‘rational intuition’, of little ‘windows’ through which Hegelians peer at the Absolute, entertain seriously, even for a moment, the idea of ‘subterranean passages’ to the noumenal? Why should a tunnel be any better than a window” (Young 1987, 29). For instance, Christopher Janaway and Frederick Copleston have leveled the complaint against Schopenhauer that he would be inconsistent in at the same time espousing transcendental idealism as well as knowledge of the noumenon. Against them, Young proposes a naturalistic interpretation of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics wherein Schopenhauer abandons the classical dualistic understanding of metaphysics in favor of ‘trialistic’ metaphysics. Schopenhauer’s knowledge of the will is then not knowledge of the thing in itself, but of something in between the phenomenal and noumenal. Accordingly, Schopenhauer would have no knowledge of ultimate reality (Young 1987, 31; cf. Dürr 2003). The obvious downside of Young’s analysis is that he is forced to deny Schopenhauer’s identification of will with the noumenon, as well as being forced to postulate a “third world, non-noumenal and hence situated within the Kantian boundaries, yet esoteric and so distinct from the ordinary world” (Young 1987, 30). Two considerations argue in Young’s favor: first, after Schopenhauer swore his allegiance to “Orthodox Kantian Idealism”, it stands to reason that he would also endorse the view that the “self in itself is just as inaccessible to human experience as the object in itself” (Young 1987, 29–30); second, if Schopenhauer postulated immediate familiarity with the thing in itself, he would be on friendly terms with his nemesis Fichte who endorsed some form of ‘intellectual intuition’ as a response to Kant’s metaphysical agnosticism (Young 1987, 30). Young’s suggestion to include a ‘third’ realm (not dualism, but trialism or ‘trichotomy’ as Young calls it), however, has fairly little textual support and runs counter to the monistic and naturalistic tendencies of Schopenhauer’s philosophy. In fact, Young’s suggestion is not so much a return to dogmatic metaphysics, but a radically new position that would nervously conflict with Occam’s razor since it suggest not one or two, but three worlds that are philosophically necessary. For further discussion, cf. Neeley 2003, 25–53.

sophism i. e. for show. As a genuine conviction it can only be found in a mad-house: accordingly, it should be treated with medication, not refutation” (W I, 124). In Schopenhauer’s view, all bodies are similar: they have both a representational and non-representational side; other bodies are analogous to my body and therefore in their innermost core, will. While this naturalistic premise definitely has some level of natural credibility for objects similar to my own body, such as other human and animal bodies, objects such as plants, stones and natural forces (wind, rain, etc.) are not as obviously analogous to my own body. Nevertheless, Schopenhauer insists that all representational objects are at bottom ‘will’ and analogous to my own body¹⁵. Accordingly, Schopenhauer *ontologizes* the knowledge he has of his own will to the entire realm of existence. Moreover, since this will is not subjugated to the principle of sufficient reason, it cannot hold any of the typical characteristics of a representation, i. e. spatiality, temporality, causality and motivation. The thing-in-itself is *toto genere* different from representation. Therefore, he characterizes it as “groundless, lying outside of the province of the principle of sufficient reason” (W I, 194); the “absence of all goals, of all boundaries, endless striving” (W I, 195); it is “eternal becoming, endless flux” (W I, 196).

Schopenhauer therefore insists that the will is absolutely free because it is groundless and cannot be determined through anything else (W I, 135, 337–138; W II, 364 ff.). Whenever this will objectifies/manifests itself, this objectification/manifestation is subject to the strictest determinism through the laws of causality, indiscriminately impelled by motives, stimuli and/or causes (W I, 137–140; W II, § 27; FW, 27–34). Accordingly, Schopenhauer defends “the strictest necessity carried through honestly, with rigid consistency, and the most complete freedom, enhanced to the point of omnipotence” (W II, 365; FW, 96–98). Absolute freedom pertains to the inner ‘being and essence’ (*esse*) of the object and strict determinism to its ‘effectuality and action’ (*operari*). Schopenhauer suggests that the will objectifying itself is not bound by any laws of necessity, yet these objectifications are rigorously bound by the laws of causality (cf. FW, 42–61). This physical determinism seems to strongly contrast with Kant’s emphatic insistence on the transcendental freedom of the human agent.

15 Schopenhauer’s argument for naturalism is usually called a weak ‘argument from analogy’ (for a different point of view, cf. Wicks 2008, 55 ff.; Magee 1983, 144). John Atwell notes that Schopenhauer’s argument is established *a contrario*, namely “if we do not carry out this extension, then we shall have to acknowledge certain very unfortunate (and even deeply disturbing) theses” (Atwell 1995, 94), namely theoretical egoism (skepticism and/or solipsism), practical egoism and metaphysical ignorance. The structure of the argument seems similar to what Kant calls in his ‘Lectures on Philosophical Theology’ a *reductio ad absurdum practicum*: not extending the will beyond our own bodies results in immoral behavior – ‘to be a scoundrel’.

Kant however readily admits that freedom in whatever form is not to be sought in the world, but beyond it: “Freedom [is] a pure transcendental idea which, first, contains nothing borrowed from experience, and second, the object of which also cannot be given determinately in any experience (A 533/B 561; cf. 5:94; 8:17). While transcendental freedom is never observed in the phenomenological realm, it should be rationally assumed to make sense of, on the one hand, the phenomenological realm as this requires a first beginning and, on the other hand, practical agency, responsibility and the moral law. The freedom Schopenhauer ascribes to the will (*Wille*) as thing in itself is clearly not the rational self-legislation that Kant ascribed to the will (*Wille*). However, Schopenhauer’s negative notion of freedom (FW, 3, 7, 27) is remarkably similar to Kant’s negative notion of freedom, namely, on the one hand, being undetermined save through choice/manifestation and, on the other hand, providing a ‘first beginning’ through such a choice/manifestation. Accordingly, I will elaborate on how Kant’s negative notion of freedom becomes an ontological premise after Schopenhauer’s naturalistic ontologization of the depraved power of choice.

Schopenhauer’s usage of the term ‘*Willkür*’ can be somewhat confusing, however. It is interesting to note that between the first (1819) and the third and last (1859) edition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I, Schopenhauer went from using the term once, to using it nine times. Discounting the times that he uses it to signify ‘arbitrary’ (e. g. W I, 58, 29, 253, 406, 626), Schopenhauer uses ‘*Willkür*’ to denote an “unhindered freedom” (W I, 13, 141, 306, 478) – never accepting any kind of “determined lawlikeness” (W I, 141) to be applied to it. Moreover, whenever he uses ‘*Willkür*’ in any metaphysically relevant manner, he seems to be saying ‘*Wille*’ at the same time. Accordingly, Schopenhauer identifies ‘*Wille*’ and ‘*Willkür*’ making the ‘*Wille*’ adhere to all the characteristics of the Kantian ‘*Willkür*’.

b) Normative decline

While Kant revolutionized philosophy by criticizing the dogmatism of some more naïve forms of rationalism (Leibniz and Wolff), he obviously does not disavow all confidence in reason. In this vein, Karl Ameriks’ characterization of Kant as a “modest rationalist” is highly appropriate (2003, 7): any absolute claims of speculative reason need to be regulated by experience. Kant’s confidence in rationality becomes more visible in practical reason, however, since there he postulates the validity and existence of several transcendental objects¹⁶ in order

16 The term ‘transcendental objects’ seems conceptually contradictory: how can something transcendental be numerically many? Kant consistently refrains from using the term ‘transcendental object’ in the plural, but does name different conceptions of the transcendental object. Accordingly, whenever I write ‘transcendental objects’, it is short-hand for ‘different conceptual formations of the transcendental object’.

to make sense of moral duty, e. g. freedom (4:448–463), the highest good (5:114–117), a radical ground of evil (6:32–38), the postulated existence of God (5:124–131), the immortality of the soul (5:122–123) and moral regeneration (6:44–49). All of these transcendental objects are necessitated by reason – although to some extent shrouded in noumenal mystery – despite what experience informs us: we will never experience freedom, the highest good, etc. but must nevertheless postulate these to make sense of moral duty¹⁷. Reason provides the tools to architectonically bring experience into a systematic, rational whole. Schopenhauer basically turns this position on its head: the architectonic holism of reason is an illusion and reality is fragmented. In other words, all order is but an illusion created by the principle of sufficient reason and beyond it lays a chaotic reality. What instigated Schopenhauer to propose his own ‘Copernican Revolution’, namely to base reality in a primal, pre-cognitive chaos rather than rational consciousness?

First, Kant acknowledges that there is a positive tendency in the natural human power of choice not to adhere to rationality. Because even the ‘evil agent’ is still irresistibly confronted with the moral law and should conform to it, the evil agent makes ‘only’ poor use of his/her freedom whenever not adhering to morality/rationality; no level of moral depravity could ever extinguish the respect human beings intellectually feel for morality (5:74–75; 6:27–28) and the responsibility they bear for their (im)moral agency. Because of this perennial respect for the eminence of morality, the human agent does not rebel against the moral law solely for the sake of rebelling; he is no Dostoevskian ‘Underground Man’ that bangs his head against the wall in sheer rebellion against logical necessity and moral convention. Nevertheless, to acknowledge a positive drive towards rebellion against morality, to the point of challenging the conative adherence to morality, seems to imply that rationality is, to some extent, alien and supernatural to the human agent¹⁸ which could go a long way in explaining why Kant was adamant about rejecting prudence as a moral practice. By itself, Kant believes

17 Henry Allison notes that this general framework is common to Kant’s solution of, on the one hand, the dynamical theoretical conflicts in the antinomy of pure reason and, on the other hand, the practical antinomy. While the thesis contradicts experience, the antithesis contradicts reason. To Kant, reason still trumps experience (Allison 1990, 20 ff.).

18 I make this statement with some level of reserve. While it appears as one of its seeming unattractive components, Kant’s philosophy thrives on dualisms – although perhaps not ontologically intended. Such dualism applies *a fortiori* to the human agent as s/he has an intelligible as well as empirical character – a distinction that Schopenhauer will pick up on. According to Kant, a human being is both natural/empirical and rational/intelligible. Rationality is, in Kant’s own view, not a transcendent standard imposed on human beings, rather a constitutive part of human nature. Nevertheless, rationality experiences incessant opposition whenever it seeks entrance in sensuous nature.

human nature to be “vice-breeding” (6:375), and prudence will never make an intention ‘morally good’ (e. g. 4:394, 5:21–22, 6:57). Rationality is not something a human agent is naturally inclined to pursue and morality remains a duty, not an inclination (e. g. 4:397–400). Moreover, despite some of Kant’s Enlightenment emancipator optimism, human nature seems impotent to overcome its radically depraved nature. Accordingly, human nature rebels against the harsh laws of reason which hints that that reason might not be the most original characteristic of human nature.

Second, if rationality/morality is to some extent alien or at least counter-natural to the human being, it stands to reason that rational humanity is not the pinnacle of creation. Schopenhauer argues, as elaborated above, for a non-reductive naturalism that – while still fixing humanity on an elevated locus in the manifestation of the will as its highest objectification – bases all possible distinctions on a quantitative, rather than qualitative basis. Rationality is then not a qualitative criterion that would principally distinguish rational agents from the rest of reality, but gradually present in all animal beings (W I, 24). Schopenhauer’s version of naturalism is of a peculiar sort because it attempts to accomplish two negative aims: to, on the one hand, resist scientific reductionism that reduces all being to dead matter and, on the other hand, contest German Idealism that explains the ‘lower’ in terms of the ‘higher’ (e. g. a state as a part of history and history as a part of the self-unfolding of the absolute spirit). The former largely explains Schopenhauer’s allegiance to Romanticism in opposing scientific reductionism (cf. W I, 31–32, 98, 132–133, 147, 155–159, 170, 173); the latter hints at some anticipatory allegiance to existentialism in opposing German Idealism (W I, 82–85, 140, 170). Schopenhauer suggests that philosophers have deliberately eschewed such naturalism because of religious superstitions. If, at bottom, ‘will’ and not ‘intellect’ is the most essential thing, human beings are essentially no different from animals: “[philosophers especially in the Christian era] were intent on depicting human beings as differing as widely as possible from animals” (W II, 223). Schopenhauer argues for the absolute “primacy of the [will] and the subordinate position of the [intellect]” (W II, 236). Schopenhauer’s naturalism might actually be motivated by a moral consideration: plants, trees, animals similarly ‘suffer’ as human beings do and, therefore, do not merit a lower moral appreciation. Schopenhauer levels the playing field between human beings and the rest of being: through stripping the human agent of his/her Kantian dignity (based upon practical reason and autonomy), Schopenhauer actually elevates the worth of other forms of life. Schopenhauer shuddered at some of the cruelty rationalist philosophers such as Descartes and Spinoza have displayed towards animals, and even Kant does not escape Schopenhauer’s wrath in this respect (FW, 161–162; BM, 238–245).

Third, if rationality is reduced in its lofty appeal, and human beings are basically no different from animals, stones, tree, etc., then one could wonder whether it would truly make sense to appeal to a normative ‘ought’ at all. Schopenhauer stresses at length that his outlook on ethics is descriptive, not normative: no “precepts or a doctrine of duty” (W I, 320), no “unconditional ought” (ibid.). There is no guiding light and no absolutes (W II, 90, 159, 206) that would lead human beings or nature forward, nature is essentially “internal rupture” (*Entzweiung mit sich selbst*) (W I, 174). The most Schopenhauer offers as quasi-ethical duties is non-obligatory prudential wisdom (*Lebensweisheit*) for human beings to live a not too objectionable life.

Fourth, when Schopenhauer wounds the normative appeal and reach of rationality and reason, it seems impossible for them to serve as means to regain some level of control over chaotic reality. From this point of view, Kant remained a rationalist with serious confidence in reason: he believed that rationality could still solve the mess created by the depravity in humanity by postulating all the necessary transcendental objects in order for there to be structure and order in the end. To Kant, reason is his guiding light; to Schopenhauer, it becomes an *ignis fatuus* (cf. BM, 132). Rationality becomes the will-o’-the-wisp that leads unsuspecting, optimistic, tired travelers to their doom rather than salvation. Schopenhauer’s distrust of reason is emphatically exemplified in the fact that while Kant bases the ground of morality on reason and autonomy, Schopenhauer bases it on compassion/*Mitleiden* (W I, 437, 444–446; BM, 203–212). If there remains some form of ‘highest good’ in Schopenhauer’s philosophy – and I use the term loosely – it would be the ascetic state of complete self-denial that is entered into through an intuitive insight based upon our immediate apprehension of being as meaningless self-expression: such an insight can numb the will to life by working as a narcotic (*Quietiv*). Kantian-styled rationality would, however, conjure up more optimistic illusions that would distract the philosopher from acknowledging this truth and lead him/her away from the highest fulfillment. According to Schopenhauer, Kantian architectonic rationality bars the possibility of the highest rather than being constitutively involved in facilitating this.

In conclusion, the conative decline reason already experiences in Kant’s propensity to evil results with Schopenhauer in a far-going naturalism that depletes reason of any real constitutive import in and control over being. Being in general becomes but meaningless self-expression, voraciously internally conflicted and eternally moving. As the human power of choice is depleted of any natural inclination to rationality, rationality loses her ontological stronghold. Reason can no longer serve so to deliver humanity from evil and we would do best to turn towards other means such as art and religion. Schopenhauer’s existential pessimism overpowers Kant’s remaining Enlightenment optimism and confidence in reason. The power of choice (*Willkür*) has become corrupted beyond self-salvation, a

corruption Schopenhauer extends to the whole realm of being. Interestingly however, Schopenhauer intuitively felt that it would make no more sense to speak moralistically about corruption if there is no ‘supreme good’ to contrast it with¹⁹. Therefore, being becomes merely a-moral happening, innocent ‘thereness’ that is in no way enlisted in an eschatological or redemptive history.

c) Grace and Religion

In order to illustrate the above, I will point towards some striking similarities between Kant and Schopenhauer’s respective philosophy of religion. Both of them suggest distinguishing religions by means of their potential service to the highest good: a ‘good religion’ facilitates the pursuit of the highest (morality or asceticism). Within these ‘good religions’, ‘religious grace’ serves as a powerful antidote to moral dismay. Schopenhauer’s notion of grace is, however, further on a path of secularization and naturalization than Kant’s, and continues his characterization of the inner essence of the world as will.

Kant distinguishes between “religion of roagation” and “moral religion” (6:51). Religion of roagation – also called ‘religion of cult’ – seeks to better the human being through either his/her own devices or through asking/begging betterment from God. Moral religion, however, posits that “to become a better human being, everyone must do as much as it is in his powers to do” (6:52). We are not to ‘bury our innate talent’ (Luke 19: 12–16), but exercise it to the best of our abilities. Religious grace is within this context that which “serves to supplement the deficiency of all [man’s] moral capacity” (6:174, cf. 6:75n). Kant blames Lutheran Pietism (the confession he was brought up in) of moral passivism: rather than pursuing and cultivating moral agency, they simply wait for grace. Such ‘mysticism’ is, in Kant’s view, morally dangerous (5:70–71, 5:121, 5:136, 6:53, 8:335) and foolish (7:46, 8:145). A morally better religion acknowledges all “moral duties as divine commands” (e. g. 5:129, 6:153–154), “the one and true religion contains nothing but laws, i. e. practical principles, of whose unconditional necessity we can become conscious and which we therefore recognize as revealed through pure reason” (6:167–168). Therefore, morally good religions facilitate the human being’s struggle with their propensity to evil. Different historical faiths inevitably always have moral and rogatory elements, and should therefore be purified of any counter-moral superstition (e. g. 6:84). Accordingly, while Kant does recycle some notions from religion such as a divine obligator and grace, he is well on his way to disconnect these from their theological and historical ba-

19 A sensation that Dostoevsky’s ‘Underground Man’ attests to in the motto of this essay: depravity becomes the ‘natural condition’ of man and rebelling against it becomes moot.

sis²⁰. Specifically, religious grace counters any pessimism that might ensue from an all-too-ready acknowledgment of the limits of human abilities (cf. 6:66–78)²¹.

Schopenhauer draws a similar distinction between different religions in virtue of their service to reaching the highest good, namely between optimistic and pessimistic religions (W II, 185–186). He enumerates Brahmanism (W II, 178, 691), Buddhism (W II, 186) and New Testament Christianity/Lutheranism²² (e. g. W II, 505), in that order, as pessimistic religions, and, Judaism (W II, 184, 188, 739), Pelagianism (W II, 184), Paganism (W II, 188) and Islam (W II, 177–178) as optimistic religions. With regard to Islam, Schopenhauer goes as far to say that in the Quran “we find the sorriest and most pitiful form of theism [...] I have been unable to discover a single valuable thought in it” (W II, 178). Generally, religions are, according to Schopenhauer, a part of the ‘metaphysical need’ of the human being. Human beings have the unique ability of becoming conscious of their impending death and consequently employ great rhetorical strategies in order to visualize their immortality. Schopenhauer calls these rhetorical strategies ‘metaphysics’: “All supposed cognizance that goes beyond the possibility of experience, and so beyond nature or things in their given phenomenon, in order to inform us as to how, in one or another sense, they are conditioned” (W II, 180). Metaphysics in other words justifies the ‘conditioned phenomenon’ by means of an ‘unconditioned absolute’, therefore allowing some conditioned things immortality²³. Schopenhauer divides different sorts of metaphysics into

20 In a well-known double footnote in the *Religion*, Kant clarifies that “historical faith [...] hinders the church’s unity and universality [and] will itself cease and pass over into a pure religious faith” (6:136n). Accordingly, the elements of ‘clothing’ that historical religion wraps around the naked body of ‘pure religious faith’ must be of the sort that “[they] can cease” (ibid.) otherwise the ‘clothing’ is more important than the moral elements. Historical religion must be set on a path towards fully universal and rational religion, or pure moral faith.

21 For a more elaborate account of Kant’s philosophical account of grace and its relationship to Christianity: Vanden Auweele, 2014.

22 For a good discussion of Schopenhauer’s relation to Luther, cf. Koßler 1997.

23 According to this definition, Schopenhauer’s philosophy of will is not ‘metaphysical’ since it is not ontologically dualistic – yet it does offer some notion of immortality (W II, 527–581). His concept of will is not an ‘absolute’ that conditions and justifies the conditioned, but the inner essence of all conditioned things. Ultimately, there is only ‘will’: Schopenhauer pushes a seeming paradoxical monism in light of his respect for Kant and his insistence that the world in itself is something *toto genere* different from the world as it appears. Early commentators such as Karl Michelet, Christfried Thilo, Eduard von Hartmann and Johannes Volkelt – even some recent commentators such as Raj Singh (2007, 58) – have argued that Schopenhauer is a metaphysician and, by this, he overreaches his Kantian epistemological heritage which makes his philosophical system collapse (cf. footnote above). Arthur Hübscher emphatically argued, as early as 1973, that these critiques miss the genuine novelty of Schopenhauer’s approach to metaphysics (Hübscher 1989, 380 ff.). After Hübscher, several authors have argued for (e. g. Janaway, in: Janaway 1999, 163 ff.) or against (Young 1987, 31; Atwell 1995, 126) the identification of Schopenhauer’s

two groups dependent on whether their validation is intrinsic than extrinsic. Philosophy is metaphysics validated intrinsically by being based on conviction (W II, 181); religion is metaphysics validated extrinsically by being based on faith (ibid., cf. W I, 381). Philosophy is for ‘the happy few’, religion for the masses, or, good religions provide philosophical truth to those of whom “thinking cannot be asked” (W II, 184). Kant defends, in some of his letters and elsewhere²⁴, a similar paternalistic on religion by distinguishing between the philosophical ‘few’ and vulgar ‘many’: not everyone should be acquainted with what he has defended in the *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* which is a scholarly work designed and written for a select number of academics and political/religious leaders, not the masses (6:10). According to Schopenhauer, religions can be beneficial to mankind – an “inestimable blessing” (W II, 184) – by allegorically conveying philosophical truth (W II, 183)²⁵. However, if religions “oppose the progress of humanity in cognizance of the truth” they must be “pushed aside” (ibid.). Schopenhauer is more callous than Kant in suggesting to ‘push aside’ negative (i. e. optimistic or rogation) religions, while Kant would merely ‘purify’ them. Still, the basic framework is surprisingly similar: those religions that assist to further their respective ‘highest good’ are welcomed and encouraged in their respective systems, while those that do not are to be discarded or purified.

While Kant believes in a number of useful fictions stemming from moral religion – such as grace, kingdom of ends, Son of God, divine obligations – Schopenhauer believes (although overtly praising Kant’s account (W II, 184)) that the possible merit of religion lies more directly in being able to communicate his/the philosophical truth to the masses in a language they might understand. In this vein, he calls “the doctrine of original sin and redemption, the great truth that makes up the core of Christianity” (W I, 480). As we have already discussed Schopenhauer’s *ontologization* of original sin – or at least Kant’s secularized form

‘will’ with the thing in itself. Nicoletta De Cian and Marco Segala (2002, 16–17) blame these authors for limiting themselves to English translations and textbooks in their attempts to assist Schopenhauer in ‘fixing’ the holes in his philosophical system. They argue that Schopenhauer’s term ‘Will’ is an abstract term for something which we know concretely (ibid. 20–21; cf. footnote 5). They neglect, however, to relate Schopenhauer’s abstract concept back to Kant’s philosophical namesake. They contend by concluding that Schopenhauer’s project is a coherent “Kantian metaphysics within the boundaries established by Kant’s *Prolegomena*” (p. 41).

24 Cf. Bohatec 1966, 25n. Cf. also the introduction to *The Conflict of Faculties* (7:5–11).

25 One of these blessings is the different biographical accounts of the lives of the saints which are often lusciously recited in religious ceremonies. According to Schopenhauer (W I, 453–471), religion can help to offer ‘flesh’ to the ‘dry bone’ of philosophical reflection on the denial of the will-to-live by offering vivid and praiseworthy examples. Needless to say, Kant has preceded Schopenhauer in appreciating historical religion as a vehicle for pure moral religion (6:115–136) and religious examples as normative ideals (6:60–66). Cf. Singh 2007, 45–54.

of it, we will finally turn our attention to the ‘redemption’ from this original sin through grace.

In his aesthetics, Schopenhauer already prepares a concept that will be strikingly similar to his religious notion of grace (*Gnade*), namely an aesthetical concept of grace (*Grazie*) as the “fitting presentation of the will through its temporal appearance” (W I, 264). A movement is graceful when it is “executed in the easiest, most appropriate and most comfortable manner” (ibid.). Schopenhauer is quick to relate this kind of graceful beauty to sculpture, and especially the sculpting of nudes (W I, 266, 270). Accordingly, Schopenhauer links aesthetic grace to a certain unveiled return to nature in which the phenomenon discards most of its adornments. Something is graceful when it is able to express its essence in the purest of ways. Similarly, Schopenhauer discusses the ethical/religious concept of grace as the “immediate expression of the freedom of the will” (W I, 478) which is, as I noted above, the most genuine characteristic of the hidden essence of all being. A human agent is infused with religious grace when it casts off its outward layers and virtually mystically becomes one with the will: s/he stops being an individual (e. g. W I, 477). Through grace, Schopenhauer claims that the human agent is “born again” (W I, 478). Being ‘born again’ is not a ‘restoration’ or, in Kant’s terms, “the recovery of the purity of the law” (6:46), but a genuinely new state of being beyond the state of nature. Since nature is completely depraved and the self-expression of the will reigns in the “kingdom of nature”, the “kingdom of grace” (W I, 478) can be no other than a wholly new domain that is absolutely free from nature. Accordingly, Schopenhauer is more inclined to side with Luther than Erasmus in their famous debate on the freedom of the will (W I, 480–481; FW, 63–64): no ‘works’²⁶ could ever justify man, only knowledge imparted to us by revelation. Similarly, Schopenhauer believes that no workings of the individual will can ever bring salvation, one needs immediate and intuitive knowledge of the inner essence of the world. Accordingly, Schopenhauer inherits via Kant a secularized form of Lutheran Pietist interpretation of original sin and turns it into an ontological premise.

3. Conclusion

Kant is the intellectual father of Schopenhauer, both theoretically as well as practically. The latter part is often overlooked in contemporary scholarship and this paper served to re-establish this connection on both an ontological and ethical level.

26 In the ‘Heidelberg Disputation’ (1518), Luther understands ‘works’ in a twofold sense: the workings of, on the one hand, God such as immanent creation (rationalism or natural theology) and, on the other hand, man such as moral agency (moralism). God is found in neither human kindness nor the beauty of creation.

Schopenhauer turns Kant's anthropological assessment of a radically depraved power of choice that, in some way, positively challenges the normativity of the moral law into an ontological premise. In a way, Schopenhauer *ontologizes* Kant's power of choice (*Willkür*). This instigates a decline in the normative appeal of reason that already started with Kant and was brought to a conceptual end in Schopenhauer's ethics: if reason is brought down from its pivotal point in consciousness – “human beings are not determined to judge theoretically and philosophically” (FW, 41) – and self-expressive voracious will is what determines being completely, then the postulations of a rational intellect are nothing but illusions brought forth by a weak mind – in need of metaphysics – to cope with its own finitude and battle the horror of being. In Schopenhauer's view, being an individual means to be in a never-ending circle of boredom and suffering, sometimes momentarily (never substantially) relieved by gratification. Kant felt a similar sting from the irrationality of being and rationally postulated a number of transcendental objects that would ultimately bring order to the chaos. Schopenhauer diagnosed these postulations as nothing but the vainglorious attempt of an individual trying to overcome his/her mortality.

Both Schopenhauer and Kant derive from a Lutheran background, a theological orientation that stressed grace over self-activity. Kant clearly rebels against the passivity in the back of Luther's *Theologia Crucis*, but seems to lack the ontological tools to celebrate human autonomy. Kant's morality does not allow the power of choice to be redolent of any primal goodness which is reserved for the rational will (*Wille*). The power of choice is radically depraved and can, in no way, pull itself out of the swamp of depravity. When Schopenhauer's turn this secularization of radical depravity into an ontological premise, he dislodges the possibility of salvation. Since all transcendent others – such as God – are out of the question, only the will can annul itself. Yet, this very will is depraved to the core and is thoroughly disinclined to serve its own salvation: not only does the world oppose the ‘highest good’, so does the human being.

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