

The World as Will and Presentation

Arthur Schopenhauer

1818

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type. —Schopenhauer gives many quotations in Greek and/or Latin; they will be given in English, usually without mention of the other languages. —The division into Books, and their titles, are his; so (in the Books) is the division into numbered chapters, but not their titles, which are added in the present version, as are the occasional cross-headings in SMALL CAPITALS. Footnotes between [square brackets] are editorial; others are Schopenhauer's. In the 'Appendix' on Kant, the chapter-numbers as well as their titles are added in the present version.—The work consisted of two volumes, of which the second is a set of commentaries on the first. Most of the philosophical world's interest has been focussed on the first, which is all that is presented here. —The work's title has most often been given in English as *The World as Will and Representation*; the present version's 'Presentation' follows the 2008 translation by Richard E. Aquila (published by Longman). This has found favour with several writers on Schopenhauer, largely because 'Representation' inevitably carries the idea of a representation *of something*, which is flatly contrary to Schopenhauer's view. Aquila, whose generous help has contributed much to the present version, gives on his pages xii–xvi a different and subtler objection to 'Representation'. From now on, Schopenhauer will be referred to as AS.

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Glossary

accident: Translates *Accidenz*, a technical term meaning ‘non-essential quality’.

affection: Translates *Affektion*. Although German dictionaries don’t support this, it seems likely that sometimes when AS speaks of an *Affektion* of x, he means only a *state* of x.

disinterested: This text uses the word always in its actual, proper meaning, namely that of ‘not *self*-interested’.

exists: This usually translates *da ist*, literally ‘is there’.

GP: Used here as short-hand for ‘Grounding Principle’, which translates *Satz von Grunde*. In English this is usually called the ‘principle of sufficient reason’, following Leibniz’s *raison* and *ratio*. Kant and AS use the German *Grund* (Leibniz did not write philosophy in German). The principle says that everything must have a reason or a cause.

identical: Translates *identisch*. There’s no way to avoid this translation, but quite often AS doesn’t mean ‘identical’ but ‘closely alike’. Similarly with ‘identity’. For example, ‘identical things’ in chapter 14.

individuation-maker: See the explanation early in chapter 23.

Knowledge: This word, with its initial capital, translates *Wissen*, which for AS is abstract knowledge that is exclusively in the province of reason. (He isn’t rigorous about this, however. For example, in chapter 14 he says that history is a case of *Wissen*.) The uncapitalised ‘knowledge’ translates *Erkenntniss*, standing for knowledge generally, of which Knowledge is one species, the others relating to perception, intuition, experience etc.

liberum arbitrium indifferentiae: AS uses this Latin phrase in its meaning ‘freedom to go either way’.

occult qualities: Hidden qualities; by AS’s time the phrase had become a term of derision in the physical sciences, standing for mysterious ‘forces’ for which no explanation can be given.

peculiar: To say that property P is peculiar to individual x or species y is to say that only x or the members of y have P.

penetration: This means ‘*seeing* through’ (German *Durchschauung*), not ‘getting through’ or ‘piercing’.

per accidens: In AS’s use of this scholastic technical term, to say that something happens to x *per accidens* is to say that its cause lies in x’s circumstances, not its own essential nature.

petitio principii: The Latin name for the fallacy of *begging the question* = arguing for a conclusion which is one of the premises. The current use of the phrase to mean *raising the question* is a product of pandemic journalistic ignorance.

positive: Translates *positiv*, which enters into two very different contrasts: **(i)** the positive/negative contrast, and **(ii)** the contrast between institutions that are man-made (*positiv*) and ones that are somehow established by nature without human intervention. Where it is clear that **(ii)** alone is in play, *positiv* is translated by ‘man-made’. In a few places there are indications of **(ii)** but ‘man-made’ doesn’t work right.

Realität: When used as a concrete noun, this is left untranslated because the only tolerable translation for it is ‘reality’, and that is reserved for *Wirklichkeit*. For AS’s distinction between these, see page 13, especially the footnote. When

Realität occurs as an abstract noun, it is translated by 'realness'.

shape: translates *Gestalt*. A better translation would be 'form', but that is used for AS's *Form*; and there are places—e.g. on page 27—where the two have to be kept apart.

speculative: Theoretical, often with an emphasis on non-normative; 'speculative philosophy' on page 34 refers to the whole of philosophy other than ethics and aesthetics.

subject of: Throughout this work, the 'subject of a cognitive state is not •what the state (belief, knowledge etc.) is *about* but rather •the thing that *is in* the state, the thing that believes, knows etc.

Upanishads: The part of the Vedas (see next item) that discuss meditation, philosophy and spiritual knowledge.

Vedas: A body of religious texts originating in ancient India.

Book IV: The world as will. Second consideration: With the achievement of self-knowledge, affirmation and denial of the will for life

53. What the ethical part of this work will be

This last part of my work promises to be the most serious, since it concerns the actions of human beings, a topic that concerns everyone immediately and can't be a matter of indifference to anyone, . . . so that people can be expected to give serious attention to this part, even if to no other.

What lies ahead would usually be called *practical* philosophy, in contrast with the label *theoretical* philosophy for what I have done up to here. But I hold that all philosophy is theoretical: it is essential to philosophy that it retains a purely contemplative attitude to any topic it turns itself to, investigating rather than prescribing. As for

- becoming practical,
- directing action,
- transforming character,

these are old pretensions that philosophy should, with matured insight, finally abandon. For *here*, where the issue is the worth or worthlessness of an existence, salvation or damnation, it is settled not by philosophy's dead concepts but by the innermost essence of the person himself. . . .—what Kant calls his 'intelligible character'. Virtue can't be taught, any more than genius can; indeed, concepts are as unfruitful for virtue as they are for art, and are useful only as tools. Thus, for us to expect our moral systems and ethics to awaken the virtuous, noble, and saintly would be as absurd as to expect our aesthetic systems to awaken poets, sculptors, and musicians.

Philosophy can never do more than to interpret and explain what exists, to bring to clear, abstract, knowledge-through-reason the nature of the world which expresses itself intelligibly to everyone *in concreto*, i.e. as feeling; but it can do this in every possible respect and from every point of view. Just as my first three Books sought to accomplish this from **other points of view**, with the generality that is proper to philosophy, so the present Book will tackle **human action** in the same manner. . . . In doing this I will really only be developing for human action the one thought that is the content of this entire work. . . .

So, obviously, no prescriptions or doctrine of duties can be expected from this ethical Book. Still less will there be a general moral principle, a universal recipe for the production of all the virtues! Also, I shan't speak of any 'unconditioned *ought*' because that involves a contradiction, as I explain in the Appendix, or of a 'law for freedom', which has the same fault. I shall simply not speak of *ought* at all. For that is how we speak to children; and to peoples still in their infancy, but not to ones that have reached the stage of cultural maturity. It is surely a blatant contradiction to call the will free and yet prescribe it laws by which it ought to will: 'ought to will'—square circle!¹ It follows from my doctrine that will is not only *free* but *omnipotent*: it is the source not only of its action but also of its world; and just as it is, so appears its action, so appears its world. From it proceeds not only its action, but also its world; and as the will is, so do its action and its world become. Both are the self-knowledge of

¹ [The German is 'hölzernes Eisen'; literally 'wooden iron', but the rhetorical use of the phrase in German makes 'square circle' fit it pretty well.]

the will and nothing more. The will determines itself, and at the same time both its action and its world; for besides it there is nothing, and these—its action and its world—*are* the will itself. So ·on my view· the will is autonomous [= self-governing], whereas on every other view it is heteronomous [= governed] by something other than itself. My philosophical efforts can only aim to clarify and explain human conduct in its innermost nature, . . . in accordance with what I have said up to here in this work, seeking to provide abstract knowledge of the innermost nature of the world's appearances. My philosophy will count as *immanent* in this Book, as in each of the other three. Despite Kant's great doctrine, it won't use the *forms* of phenomena as a vaulting-pole by which to •leap over the phenomena from which they get their meaning, and •land in the boundless domain of empty fictions. But this actual world of experience—in which we are, and which is in us—remains both the material and the limits of our consideration; it's a world so rich in content that even the deepest inquiry the human mind is capable of couldn't exhaust it. Since the real world of experience will never fail to provide material and *Realität* to my ethical investigations, any more than to the previous ones, there won't be the slightest need for us to take refuge in empty negative conceptions, and then somehow make ourselves believe that we are *saying something* when with eyebrows raised we speak of such bare negations as 'the absolute', 'the infinite', 'the supersensible' or the like. . . .

Finally, I shan't in this Book—any more than I have in the others—relate histories and give them out as philosophy. For I hold that anyone who thinks he can understand the world's nature *historically*—however finely decked out the history may be—is vastly far from philosophical knowledge of the world. But that's what someone is guilty of if he

- sees the *essence in itself* of the world as involving any

sort of becoming, or of having become, or of being about to become; or

- sees it as involving any sort of earlier or later that has the least significance; and thus
- whether openly or covertly seeks and ·(he thinks)· finds a beginning and an endpoint of the world, along with a path between the two, and is confident of his own position on that path.

Such *historical philosophising* provides a cosmogony [the varieties of which AS mockingly describes, dismissing them as 'nonsense'. He continues:] All such historical philosophy, however elegantly it is carried out, regards time as a determination of things in themselves (as if Kant had never existed!), and therefore remains with

- what Kant calls the phenomenon as opposed to the thing in itself, and
- what Plato calls the becoming, never being, as opposed to the being that never becomes, or
- what the Indians called the veil of Maya.

One never attains to the inner essence of things in that way; one gets only knowledge subject to the GP, pursuing phenomena *ad infinitum* like a squirrel in a treadmill, until one stops, exhausted, at some arbitrary point, and wants to be respected for having come that far. The genuinely philosophical way of regarding the world, i.e. the one that teaches us to recognise its inner essence and so leads us beyond phenomena, doesn't inquire into the *Whence?* and *Whither?* and *Why?* of the world, but only into its *What?*, regarding things

- not with respect to any relation,
 - not as becoming and passing away, and thus
 - not according to any of the four modes of the GP,
- but rather considers •what remains after separating off everything governed by the GP, •the essence of the world

that makes its appearance in all relations but is never itself subject to them, •their ideas. Such knowledge generates not only art but also philosophy and (as we'll find in this Book, [chapter 68]) also the disposition of mind which alone leads to true saintliness and redemption from the world.

54. Procreation and death

It is hoped that the first three Books will have conveyed clear and certain knowledge that in the world as presentation a mirror of the will has arisen in which the world knows itself with increasing degrees of clarity and completeness, the highest of which is the human being, whose nature receives its complete expression only through the interconnected series of its actions, which the human being is aware of through reason, which always permits him to survey the whole *in abstracto*.

The will—

which, **considered purely in itself**, lacks knowledge and is only a blind ceaseless impulse such as we see also appearing in inorganic and vegetable nature and its laws, as well as in the vegetative part of our own life

—receives **through the addition of the world as presentation**, which is developed in subjection to it, the knowledge of its own willing and of *what* it wills, namely that there shall be nothing other than this world, this life, precisely as it stands before it. That is why I called the phenomenal world its mirror, its objectivisation. And since what the will always wills is *life*—because life is nothing more than a display of that willing with respect to presentation—it makes no difference if instead of simply saying ‘will’ we say ‘will for life’.

Since will is *the thing in itself*, the inner content or essence of the world, while life—the visible world, the phenomenon—

is only the mirror of the will, life must accompany will as inseparably as a body is accompanied by its shadow; and if will exists, so too does life, the world. To the will for life, life is thus certain, and so long as we are filled with the will for life we shouldn't be concerned for our existence, even at the sight of death. We of course see individuals arise and pass away. But the individual is only a phenomenon, only exists for knowledge caught up in the GP, the individuation-maker. With respect to this kind of knowledge the individual receives its life as a gift and comes from nothing, loses that gift through death and returns to nothing. But we want to regard life philosophically, i.e. in accordance with its ideas, and looking at it in that way we shan't find that either

•will, the thing in itself in all phenomena, or

•the subject of knowledge, spectator of all phenomena,

is in any way touched by birth or death. Birth and death belong to the *phenomenon* of will, thus to life, and it is essential to life to be displayed fleetingly in individuals that arise and pass away, time-bound phenomena of something that knows no time in itself but must be displayed in this way so as to objectify its true essence. Birth and death equally belong to life, and counterbalance one another as reciprocal conditions, or, if one likes the expression, as •opposite• poles of the whole phenomenon of life. [AS goes on to say that this thesis is a doctrine in ‘the wisest of all mythologies, the Indian’, which expresses it by the different roles it assigns to different gods, and by decorating **a** the penis with a necklace of **b** skulls, ‘thus signifying that **a** generation and **b** death are essentially correlatives, which reciprocally neutralise and cancel each other’. He then turns to ancient Greek and Roman coffins, which were elaborately decorated with depictions of festivals etc., of which he says:] The purpose was obviously to direct people's attention away from the death of the mourned individual and onto the immortal life

of nature, and to indicate—without any call on abstract knowledge—that the whole of nature is the phenomenon of the will for life and indeed its fulfillment. The form of this phenomenon is •time, •space, and •causality, and by means of these •individuation, which brings with it that individuals must arise and pass away; but this doesn't disturb the will for life—of whose phenomenon the individual is only a single example or specimen—any more than the whole of nature is harmed by the death of an individual. What matters to nature is not the individual but only **the species**, for whose maintenance it presses with all seriousness, lavishly providing for it through •a huge over-abundance of seeds and •the great power of the drive to impregnate. Whereas **the individual** doesn't and can't have any value for nature, whose realm is infinite time and infinite space, and within these an infinite number of possible individuals; so that nature is constantly prepared to let the individual fall. Thus the individual is not only •exposed to destruction in a thousand ways through the most insignificant accident, but is •destined for it from the outset and led to it by nature itself just as soon as it—the individual—has done its work for the maintenance of the species. In this way nature openly expresses the great truth that only ideas, not individuals, have true realness, i.e. are complete objectivisations of will. Now, since man is nature itself—and indeed nature at its highest degree of self-consciousness—and nature is only the objectified will to live, the man who has grasped and held onto this point of view may well console himself over his own death and that of his friends by turning his eyes to the immortal life of nature, which he himself is. That's how we are to understand the decorated penis, and the ancient sarcophagi with their images of the most fervent life, calling to those who regard them in a state of lamentation 'Nature is not saddened'.

That procreation and death should be regarded as essential to life (this phenomenon of will) also emerges from the fact that they are both displayed to us only as more powerful expressions of something that all the rest of life consists in. Namely: life is nothing but a constant **a** exchange of matter in the fixed **b** permanence of form, and this is exactly the **a** transitory condition of individuals in relation to the **b** permanence of species. **Constant nourishment differs only in degree from reproduction and procreation.** Nourishment shows itself most simply and distinctly in the plant. Reproduction is through and through only a constant replication of the same drive, with the plant's simplest fibers grouped together into leaves and branches, making a systematic aggregate of homogeneous, mutually supporting plants, the constant regeneration of which is their single drive. It rises to a more complete satisfaction of that drive by climbing the ladder of metamorphosis, finally arriving at blossoms and fruit—at that compendium of its existence and striving—in which it now takes a shorter path to its single goal, and now with a single stroke accomplishes a thousand-fold what until then it had brought about only within the individual: self-replication. Its earlier growth and development stands in the same relation to its fruit as ·hand-·writing stands to printing. It is obviously just the same with animals. The nutritive process is one of constant generation, the process of procreation a more highly potentiated process of nourishment; the sensual pleasure in procreation a more highly potentiated enjoyment of the feeling of life.

Constant excretion differs only in degree from death. The constant exhalation and casting off of matter is the same thing as—though less highly potentiated than—death, the opposite of procreation. So just as we are always content to preserve the form without mourning the cast-off matter, we should conduct ourselves in the same way with regard

to death, which is just a more highly potentiated and more comprehensive equivalent of what occurs daily and hourly in the individual with excretion: just as we are indifferent in the first case, we should not recoil from the second. From this standpoint, it therefore appears just as perverse to demand continuation of one's individual case, which is replaced by other individuals, as to demand permanence of the matter of one's body, which is constantly replaced by new matter. It appears just as foolish to embalm corpses as it would be to conscientiously preserve one's excrement. As for the individual consciousness bound to the individual body, it is entirely interrupted by sleep every day. Deep sleep, with respect to its present duration, is not at all different from death, into which it often smoothly passes, e.g. in freezing to death, but only with respect to the future, namely, so far as waking is concerned. Death is a sleep in which individuality is forgotten; everything else reawakens, or rather has remained awake.

Above all, we must clearly recognise that the form of the will's phenomenon—thus the form of life or of *Realität*—is really only the *present*, not the future or the past, which exist only in concepts, only in the context of knowledge that follows the GP. No human being has lived in the past, nor will any live in the future; rather the present is the only form of all life—it is life's sure possession which can never be torn from it. The present always exists, together with its content; both stand firm, without wavering, like the rainbow over the waterfall. . . .

Of course, when we think back on the millennia that have passed and on the millions of people who have lived in them, we ask: what were they? what has become of them? But we need only to recall the past of our own life and revive its

scenes vividly in imagination, and then again ask: what was all this? what has become of it?¹ As it is with this, so it is with the life of those millions. Or should we suppose that the past, being sealed by death, gains a new existence? Our own past, even the closest—*yesterday*—is only an empty imaginary dream, and the past of all those millions is the same. What was? What is? ·The answer is:·

•The will of which life is the mirror, and •the will-free knowledge that gets a clear distinct glimpse of the will in that mirror.

Anyone who hasn't yet recognised this, or refuses to recognise it, should add to the previous question about the fate of past generations this further one:

Why is precisely *he*, the questioner, so fortunate as to have this precious, fleeting present, which alone is real, while those hundreds of human generations—including heroes and sages—of those ·past· times have sunk into the night of the past and thereby become nothing, whereas he, his insignificant *I*, actually exists?

Or more briefly, though strangely:

Why is this now, *his* now, in fact precisely *now* and not *long ago*?

In asking such strange questions, he is viewing his existence and his time as mutually independent, and the former as having been projected into the latter; he really assumes two *Nows*, one for the object, the other for the subject, and marvels over the lucky chance that they coincide. But in truth the present—as I showed in my treatise on the GP—is only the point of contact between the object (whose form is time) and the subject (which has none of the modes of the GP for its form). All objects are *will* that has become

¹ [The switch from two plural questions to two singular ones is in the original.]

presentation, and the subject is the necessary correlate of all objects. But there are real objects only in the present; past and future contain mere concepts and mental images; therefore the present is the essential form pertaining to will's phenomenon and is inseparable from it. The present alone is that which always exists and stands immovably firm. Empirically apprehended it is the most fleeting of all things; but to a metaphysical view that looks beyond empirical perception's forms it comes across as that which alone persists, the *Nunc stans* [Latin = 'standing now'] of the scholastics. The source and bearer of its content is the will for life, or the thing in itself—which is what we are. That which evermore becomes and passes away. . . . pertains to the phenomenon as such, whose forms make arising and passing away possible. Therefore one should think:

•Quid fuit? Quod est.

•Quid erit? Quod fuit.

Or, replacing the Latin by English,

•What has been? What is.

•What will be? What has been.

—taking this in the strict sense of the terms, thus meaning not *simile* but *idem* [= 'not similar but the very same']. For life is certain for will, and the present 'is certain' for life. So everyone can say: 'I am once and forever lord of the present, and it will accompany me through all eternity as my shadow; accordingly, I do not wonder where it came from and how it happens to be precisely *now*.'

We can compare time to an endlessly turning circle: the constantly falling half would be the past, the constantly rising one the future; and the indivisible point at the top—touched by the tangent—would be the unextended present. Just as the tangent does not rotate with the circle, neither does the present 'move with time'. . . . Or time is like a ceaseless stream, and the present like a rock which the

stream breaks on but does not sweep along with it.

Will, as *thing in itself*, is no more subject to the GP than is the knowing subject. . . ., and just as •life, which is will's own phenomenon, is certain for it, so too is •the present, which is the only form of actual life. So we need not inquire into the past before life or the future after death; rather, we have only to recognise the single form in which the will manifests itself, *the present*; it won't escape from will, and will won't escape from it. So anyone who is satisfied by life as it is, and affirms it in every way, can confidently regard it as endless, and banish the fear of death as a deception that would •give him the absurd fear that he could ever be deprived of the present, and •delude him with the idea of a time with no present in it; the same deception with respect to time as that other 'deception' with respect to space, by virtue of which everyone in his imagination views his present position on our globe as *above* and all others as *below*. . . . Essential to the objectification of will is the form of the present, which, as an unextended point, intersects the time that is infinite on either side and stands immovably firm, like an everlasting noon without a cooling evening: like the actual sun that burns without halt, while it only seemingly sinks into the lap of night. So if someone fears death as his annihilation, it is like thinking that the sun might lament in the evening: 'Woe to me! I go down into eternal night.'

Quite to the contrary: if life's burdens press on someone who •wants to have life and affirms it but •abhors its torments and •would no longer bear the hard lot that has befallen him—such a one cannot hope to be liberated by death and can't rescue himself by suicide. Only with false illusion does cool dark Orcus—the god of the underworld—lure him as a haven of peace. The earth rolls on from day into night; the individual dies; but the sun itself burns without remission in an eternal noon. Life is certain for the will

for life: life's form is a present without end, no matter how individuals—phenomena of ideas—arise and pass away in time, like fleeting dreams. So suicide appears to me here as a futile and therefore foolish act. When I have carried my considerations further, it will be displayed in an even more unfavourable light.

Dogmas change and our knowledge is deceptive, but nature does not err; its course is sure and it doesn't conceal it. Everything is entirely within nature, and it is entirely within everything. It has its centre in every animal. The animal found its way surely into existence, as it will surely find its way out, in the meantime living without fear or anxiety over the prospect of annihilation, supported by the consciousness that it (the animal) is nature itself and is imperishable as nature is.

Only the human being carries about with him in abstract concepts the certainty of his death; yet this troubles him only on the rare occasions when for a single moment something calls it up to his imagination. Against the powerful voice of nature, ·concept-using· reflection can do little. In man as in animals, that assurance ·of imperishability· holds sway as a permanent condition—originating from the innermost consciousness that he is nature, that he is the world itself. Because of this, a human being is not much disturbed by thought of certain and never-distant death, and everyone goes on living as if he must live forever. This is carried so far that it can be said that nobody has a truly living conviction of the certainty of his death, for otherwise his state of mind wouldn't differ much from that of a condemned criminal. Everyone acknowledges this certainty *in abstracto* and theoretically, but sets it aside without taking it up into his living consciousness, as he does with other theoretical truths that have no practical application. Anyone who carefully considers this unique feature of the human

disposition will see that psychological explanations of it in terms of habit and acceptance of the inevitable are far from sufficient, and that its basis is the deeper-lying one that I have presented. That basis also explains why dogmas of some sort of survival of the individual after death are in good repute at all times and among all peoples, though proofs of it must always be highly inadequate and proofs against it are strong and numerous. Indeed, this really needs no proof, but is recognised by sound understanding as a fact and fortified as such by the confidence that nature lies as little as it errs, but rather exhibits its doings and essence openly, even innocently pronounces them, while it is only we who obscure them with our delusions, seeking to infer from them only what appeals to our limited viewpoint.

But what I have now brought to clear consciousness, namely the fact

- that, although the individual phenomenon of the will begins in time and ends in time, the will itself (as *thing in itself*) is not touched by this, nor is the correlate of all objects, the knowing but never known subject; and that
- life is always certain for the will for life,

is not to be counted among those doctrines of survival. For **permanence** has no more to do with the will or with the pure subject of knowing (the eternal eye of the world) than **transitoriness** does, for both are predicates that are valid only in time, and the will and the pure subject of knowing lie outside time. Therefore the egoism of the individual (this particular phenomenon of the will enlightened by the subject of knowing) can extract as little nourishment and consolation for his wish to endure through endless time from the view I have expressed, as he could from the knowledge that after his death the rest of the eternal world would continue to exist, which is just the expression of the same view ·as

mine-, considered objectively and therefore temporally. For each human being is transitory only as phenomenon, while as thing in itself he is timeless and so endless; but it is only as phenomenon that he is distinct from other things in the world, as thing in itself he is the will that appears in all of them, and death destroys the illusion that separates his consciousness from that of the others. This is survival.¹ His being untouched by death, which pertains to him only as thing in itself, coincides for the phenomenon with the rest of the external world's survival.

From this too comes the fact that the inner and merely *felt* consciousness of that which we have just raised to the level of clear knowledge prevents the thought of death from poisoning the life of rational beings—such consciousness being the basis of the vital spirit that sustains all living things and lets them live cheerfully as though there were no death, as long as they have their eye on life and are directed towards it. But it doesn't prevent it from being the case that when death approaches the individual in a particular case—in reality, or only in imagination—and he must now look it in the eye, he is gripped by a fear of death and tries in every way to escape it. For just as

when his knowledge was directed toward life as such,
he had to recognise what was imperishable in it,

so also

when death confronts him, he has to recognise it for
what it is, the temporal end of an individual temporal
phenomenon.

What we fear in death is not at all pain: **(i)** pain obviously lies on this side of death; also **(ii)** we often flee pain into death, as well as **(iii)** sometimes taking on the most horrific pain so as to escape death for a while longer, even when death

would be quick and easy. So we distinguish pain from death as two entirely distinct evils. What we fear in death is the destruction of the individual that it openly announces itself as being; and since the individual is the will for life itself in a particular objectification, its whole nature struggles against death.

Where feeling leaves us as helpless as this, reason can still enter in and mostly counteract feeling's adverse influence, because reason sets us on a higher **standpoint**, from which we look not at the individual but at the whole. [AS goes on to say that this may be enough to 'overcome the terrors of death' for someone who has come this far with AS's line of thought but has not yet come to recognise lasting suffering as essential to all life. Such a person, he says,] would face with indifference the death that is rushing toward him on the wings of time, regarding it as a false illusion, an impotent spectre to frighten the weak but with no power over •someone who knows that he himself *is* the will whose objectification or image is the entire world,. . . •someone who can't be frightened by any infinite past or future in which he fails to exist,. . . •someone who has to fear death as little as the sun fears the night.

[AS decorates this line of thought with quotations from the Bhagavad Gita and Goethe, and adds:] The philosophy of Bruno and that of Spinoza could also lead someone to this **standpoint** if his conviction is not disturbed or weakened by their mistakes and imperfections. Bruno's philosophy has no real ethics; and ethics in the philosophy of Spinoza doesn't come from the core of his doctrine but—though in itself praiseworthy and fine—is tacked onto it only by means of weak and blatant sophisms. Indeed, many people would be at the **standpoint** in question if their knowledge kept pace

¹ [*die Fortdauer*; it could mean 'immortality'.]

with their will, i.e. if they were in a position to become—free from all delusion—clear and distinct to themselves. For this is. . . the standpoint of *affirmation of the will for life*.

[What follows is an obscure passage the gist of which is: at a certain stage will operated as ‘a blind effort without knowledge’, but now the point is reached where it operates ‘with knowledge, consciously and deliberately’; and AS emphasizes that this knowledge does not hinder the will’s willing. He continues:] The opposite of this, the *denial of the will for life*, shows itself when that knowledge brings willing to an end because the individual known phenomena no longer act as motives for willing, and what happens instead is that one’s whole knowledge of the world’s nature (the mirror of the will) that has grown up through the grasp of ideas becomes a *quieter* of the will; so that the will freely nullifies itself. It is to be hoped that these concepts—unfamiliar and in this general statement of them barely intelligible—will soon become clear, when I describe the actions of phenomena that express (on the one hand) *affirmation* of the will in its various degrees and (on the other hand) its *denial*. Both of these come from knowledge, to be sure, though not from an abstract sort of knowledge that expresses itself in words, but rather from a living knowledge that expresses itself only through one’s deeds and way of life and is independent of the dogmas which, as abstract knowledge, occupy reason. My only goal can be to depict both sorts of knowledge and bring them to the level of clear knowledge involving reason; I shan’t try to prescribe or recommend either of them, which would be as foolish as it would be useless, because *will in itself* is absolutely free and uniquely self-determining, and there is no law for it.

But before proceeding to that exposition, I must first **(i)** explain and more exactly determine this freedom and its relation to necessity, and then **(ii)** with reference to will and

its objects, offer some further general considerations regarding that life whose affirmation and denial is our problem; through all of which I’ll make it easier for us to recognise the ethical significance of those ways of behaving according to their innermost nature.

Because this whole work is only the unfolding of a single thought, its parts are all intimately interconnected, with every part related to and presupposing all the others. In a philosophy consisting merely of a series of inferences, each part is necessarily related only to the immediately preceding one, thus requiring the reader to remember only that; but the present work requires him to remember also all the earlier parts—so as to connect them with what he is reading at the moment. Plato made that same demand on his readers with the convoluted meanderings of his dialogues, returning to the main thought only after long digressions that clarify it. In my case the demand is necessary. I have had to divide my one and only thought into several considerations because otherwise I couldn’t have communicated it; but that division is not essential to the thought but only an artificial form.

The division into four Books, from four main points of view, and the most painstaking connection of things that are related or alike, helps the exposition and make it easier to grasp. Yet the material itself entirely rules out advancing in a straight line, as one can with historical material, and requires a more convoluted account which in turn requires a repeated study of the work, this being the only way for the interconnection of all the parts to be clarified, and all of them together finally to illuminate one another and be made perfectly clear.

55. Freedom and determinism

That will as such is *free* follows from its being (according to my view) the thing in itself, the content of all phenomena, whereas we know phenomena as altogether subject to the GP in its four forms; and because we know that

- necessity and
- following from a given ground

are interchangeable concepts, everything that belongs to the phenomenon—i.e. that is object for the individual knowing subject—is on the one hand ground and on the other hand consequence, and as a consequence is determined with complete necessity and so can't be in any respect other than it is. The entire content of nature—the totality of its phenomena—is thus throughout necessary; and the necessity of every part, every phenomenon, every event, can be shown in every case, because it must *always* be possible to discover the ground of which it is a consequence. This follows from the unlimited validity of the GP. On the other hand, this same world in all of its phenomena is the objectivisation of *will*, which—

since it is not itself a phenomenon, not a presentation or an object but *thing in itself*, is also not subject to the GP, the form of all objects

—is thus not determined as consequence by a ground, and thus knows no necessity, i.e. is free. So the concept of freedom is thus really a negative one, in that its content is merely the denial of necessity, i.e. of the ground-to-consequence relation according to the GP.

Here we have at its clearest •the solution¹ of that great opposition, •the reconciliation of freedom with necessity of which there has recently been much talk, though none of it

(so far as I am aware) has been clear and adequate. Each thing *as phenomenon*, as object, is absolutely necessary; the same thing *in itself* is will, which is perfectly free for all eternity. [AS now embarks on an account of how freedom, though confined to the thing in itself, nevertheless also 'comes to the fore' in the phenomenon, so that there's a self-contradiction *within* the phenomenon. This complicated discussion brings in art, ideas, self-denial, and saintliness; AS says that he can't make it entirely intelligible until he reaches chapter 70, until when he will entirely set it aside. Let us follow suit!].

All I have been doing here is to indicate in a general way how the human being is distinguished from all other phenomena of will by the fact that freedom, i.e. independence of the GP, which pertains only to will as thing in itself and is contrary to phenomena, can *possibly* enter into the phenomenon, although it is then necessarily displayed there as a self-contradiction within the phenomenon. In this sense, not only will in itself, but even the human being can indeed be called 'free' and be distinguished by that from all other beings. But how this is to be understood can be made clear only on the basis of everything to follow, and for now we must continue to abstract from it entirely.

First off, we must avoid the error of supposing that the conduct of an individual human being is not subject to necessity, i.e. that the power of motives is less certain than the power of causes or the drawing of conclusions from premises. Freedom of will as thing in itself. . . .in no way transfers immediately to its phenomenon, not even where the latter has achieved the highest level of visibility, and thus not to rational animals with individual characters, i.e. persons. These are never free, although they are the phenomenon of

¹ [*Einheitspunkt*, literally meaning 'point of unity'.]

a free will. [In an astonishingly difficult passage, AS goes on to say that **(i)** a person's actions are law-governed because they are appearances of a non-temporally unified will, but that **(ii)** each of those actions is ascribable to free will and immediately announces itself to consciousness as such, and so **(iii)** everyone is led by his natural feeling to think that **a** he is free in his individual actions, in the sense that in any given case any action would be possible for him, and only recognises from experience and reflection on it that **b** his action comes with complete necessity from the conjunction of character and motives. He describes **a** as *a priori* and **b** as *a posteriori*. He continues:] That is why those with the crudest minds, following their feeling, passionately defend complete freedom in individual actions, while the great thinkers of all ages have denied it, as have indeed the more profound systems of religion. But to anyone to whom it has become clear that a person's entire nature is will, of which he is himself only a phenomenon, and that such a phenomenon falls under the GP and so obeys the law of motivation, any doubt as to the inevitability of an action, given the character and motives at hand, would strike him as like doubting the equivalence of the three angles of a triangle to two right angles.

·INTELLIGIBLE CHARACTER AND EMPIRICAL CHARACTER·

The necessity of individual actions has been most satisfactorily shown by Priestly in his *Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity*. But the compatibility of this necessity with the freedom of *will in itself*, i.e. beyond the phenomenon, was first shown by Kant, whose achievement is particularly great here because he presents the distinction between **a** intelligible character and **b** empirical character. I retain this distinction in its entirety, since **a** the former is will as thing in itself making its appearance in a particular individual, to a

particular degree, while **b** the latter is this appearance itself, as displayed in ways of behaving (with respect to time, and even in one's corporeal form with respect to space). The best way to make the relation between the two comprehensible is the one I used in the introductory treatise *·On the fourfold root of the GP·*, namely:

Any person's **a** intelligible character is to be regarded as an act of *will*, outside time and thus indivisible and unalterable; and the phenomenon of that, developed and elaborated within time and space and all the forms belonging to the GP, is his **b** empirical character, exhibited for experience in his whole conduct and way of life.

Just as a whole tree is only the constantly repeated phenomenon of one and the same drive, which is most simply displayed in its fibers and repeated in the process of assemblage into leaf, stem, branch, trunk, and is easily recognisable in them, so all of a person's actions are only the constantly repeated expression (somewhat changing in their form) of his **a** intelligible character, and the induction based on the sum of these yields his **b** empirical character. I shan't replicate Kant's masterful account by reworking it here, but shall presuppose it as already known.

[AS now talks about earlier works of his in which free will is discussed, notably one which in 1840 was awarded a prize in Norway. Out of the tangle of these, he selects a topic that was treated in one of them, namely the common belief in 'absolute freedom of will' such that at a given moment a person's conduct could go either way. He continues with that here:]

The illusion of an empirical freedom of the will (instead of the transcendental, which is the only freedom attributable to it), thus of a freedom of individual deeds, arises from the separate and subordinated position of intellect with respect

to will. . . . Intellect learns of the resolutions of the will only *a posteriori* and empirically. So when it looks to a choice that has not yet been made, it has no information about how the will is going to decide. The intellect has no knowledge of the *intelligible* character by virtue of which (when motives are given) only *one* decision is possible (so that this is a necessary one); all it knows is the *empirical* character, made known to it successively through the person's individual acts. So it seems to the intellect that when someone confronts a choice, two contrary decisions are equally possible for the will. But this is like saying, of a vertically standing pole which has begun to wobble, 'It can fall to the right side or to the left', where *can* has a merely subjective meaning and really means 'with respect to the data known to us'; for objectively the direction of the fall is already necessarily determined as soon as the wobbling begins. So too the decision of one's own will is merely undetermined with respect to its spectator, one's own intellect, thus only relatively and subjectively; whereas in itself and objectively, with every choice set before us, the decision is at once determined and necessary. But this determination enters consciousness only with the ensuing decision. [AS talks now about how sometimes when we know that a difficult decision will have to be made we think hard and elaborately about the forces that might drive us to decide it in one way or the other, trying to see each in its best light. But, he continues:] this clear unfolding of the motives on both sides is all that the intellect can do when a choice is to be made. It awaits the real decision just as passively and with the same intense curiosity as it does the decision of someone else's will. So from its standpoint each decision must appear equally possible; and this is the illusion of empirical freedom of the will. The decision enters the sphere of intellect in an entirely empirical way, as the final upshot of the matter; but it came from the inner nature, the intelligible

character, of the individual will in its conflict with given motives, and therefore came with complete necessity. All the intellect can do here is to illuminate the nature of the motives sharply and from all sides; it can't determine the will itself, because the will is entirely inaccessible to it and can't be investigated.

If someone could in the same circumstances act now in one way and at another time in another, then between the two times his will would have to have *changed* and thus would have to lie within time, because that's the only way change is possible; but that would require •the will to be a mere phenomenon or or else •time to be a determination of the thing in itself. So the dispute over the freedom of individual actions, over the *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae* [see Glossary], really turns on the question of whether the will lies within time. If it is—as Kant's doctrine and the whole of my account require—as *thing in itself* beyond time and every form of the GP, then not only •must the individual person act constantly in the same way in the same situation, and not only •does his every evil deed provide a solid guarantee of countless others that he *must* perform and *can't* omit, but •if his empirical character and motives were completely given, it would also be possible (as Kant says) to calculate his future behaviour like an eclipse of the sun or moon. Just as nature is consistent, so is character: every action must happen in accord with it, just as every phenomenon must turn out in accord with natural law. . . . The will of which a person's entire being and life is the phenomenon cannot be renounced in an individual case, and what he wills on the whole he will constantly will in the individual case.

The assertion of an empirical freedom of will, of a *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*, fits exactly with the view that the essence of a human being consists in a *soul* that is basically a knowing (indeed an abstractly thinking) being and only in

consequence of that a willing being; this treats will as something of a secondary nature, whereas really it is knowledge that is secondary. (Descartes and Spinoza even regarded will as an act of thought, and identified it with judgment.) According to this view, every human being becomes what he is only as a consequence of his knowledge: he entered the world as a moral blank, acquired knowledge of the things in it, and drew conclusions from it. On that basis he resolved to be this or that person, to act in this or that way; new knowledge could lead him to adopt a new way of acting and so become a different person. The view in question also implies that a person first recognises something as good and is led by that to will it, instead of first willing it and being led by that to call it *good*. My own fundamental viewpoint implies that all this is a reversal of the true relationship. Will is the first and basic thing, knowledge merely added onto it, serving will's phenomenon as a tool. So every person is what he is by his will, and his character is fundamental; for willing is the basis of his being. Through the addition of knowledge he learns in the course of experience *what he is*, i.e. he comes to know his character. He thus knows himself in consequence of and according to the make-up of his will, instead of, as on the old view, willing in consequence of and according to his knowledge. According to the old view, he needs only to think about how he would most like to be and he'll be like that; that is his freedom of the will. So it consists in a person's being his own work, by the light of knowledge. Whereas I say that he is his own work in advance of all knowledge, which is merely added on to illuminate the work. For this reason, he cannot decide to be such or such a person, nor can he become someone else; but he *is*, once and for all, and after that recognises what he is. For the others, he wills what he recognises; for me, he recognises what he wills.

[After a learnedly documented paragraph about the words the ancient Greeks used for 'character' and 'custom', which AS says shows that 'they expressed constancy of character metaphorically in terms of constancy of habit', he turns to Christianity:] In Christian theology we find the dogma of *predestination in consequence of election and non-election by grace* [Romans 9:11-24], obviously originating from the insight that a human being does not change himself; rather, his life and conduct—i.e. his empirical character—is only the unfolding of the intelligible character; . . . so a child's way of life is already determined at his birth (so to speak). I agree with this, though I don't undertake to speak for the consequences of combining this entirely correct insight with dogmas that were available in the doctrine of Jewish faith, and that then provided the supreme difficulty—the eternally irresolvable Gordian knot—around which revolve the great majority of disputes within the ·Christian· church. Even the apostle Paul was hardly successful here, with the metaphor of the potter that he put to the purpose [Romans 9:21]. . . . But considerations of this sort are strictly foreign to our subject. Much more to the point now will be some discussion of the relation between character and the knowledge in which all of its motives lie.

The motives that determine how character appears, or determines conduct, affect it through the medium of knowledge; and knowledge is changeable, often shifting back and forth between error and truth; though it usually tends towards truth as the person gets older—admittedly to very different degrees. Someone's conduct can noticeably alter without this justifying an inference to an alteration in his character. We can never act on him through teaching in a way that alters •what he really over-all wills, •what his innermost being strives for, •the goal that he pursues; otherwise we could re-model him! Seneca says it superbly: *Velle non discitur*

[Latin for 'Willing is not learned'], in which he prefers truth to his Stoics who said 'Virtue can be taught'. The will can be acted on from outside only through motives. But these can never alter the will itself; for they have power over it only on the presupposition that it is precisely such as it is. Motives can only change the *direction* of its striving, i.e. make it seek *on a different path* that which it has been unalterably seeking up to now. [AS develops this thought, with talk about means to ends, including such means as 'shrewdness, force and deception, abstinence, righteousness, alms, pilgrimages to Mecca'. He insists:] Such changes make no change in the person's striving, still less in the person himself. So even if his conduct is very differently displayed at different times, his willing has remained entirely the same. *Velle non discitur*.

For motives to have any effect, they must not only exist but also be known; for, according to the excellent formulation of the scholastics, 'The final cause acts not according to what is really the case but according to what is known'. [AS gives this in Latin. He goes on to say, through a cloudy example, that changes in someone's knowledge can lead to changes in his behaviour in what seem to be the same circumstances (but are not really so, because his knowledge-gain changes the internal circumstances). Although this passage begins by talking about knowledge of one's *motives*, the quoted scholastic thesis speaks only of 'what is known' with no restriction to 'of one's motives'; the example AS gives is about someone's knowledge not of his motives but of his external circumstances; and the passage ends with a phrase meaning 'his knowledge of his circumstances'. That notion is visibly at work at the start of the next paragraph, but before it is ended, AS reverts to talking about what happens when someone's *motives* 'enter his knowledge'.]

Just as ignorance of actually existing circumstances robs them of their influence, so (on the other hand) entirely

imaginary circumstances can have effects as though they were real, not only in an individual deception but also on a large scale and over a period of time. If someone is firmly convinced that each of his good deeds will be rewarded a hundredfold in a future life, this belief comes into play and is effective as a good bill of exchange at a very long date; and he can *give* out of egoism just as he would *take* out of egoism if he saw things differently. He has not changed himself: *Velle non discitur*. By virtue of this great influence of knowledge on action while the will remains unalterable, one's character is unfolded and its various traits come to the fore. So it shows up differently at different periods of life, and an intense, wild youth can be followed by a composed, moderate age of manhood. What is bad in a character will come out more strongly with time; but sometimes passions that a person indulged in as a youth are voluntarily reined in later on, simply because the opposing motives have entered his knowledge. Therefore we are all guiltless at the outset, which merely means that neither we nor others know the evil in our own nature; it shows up only in connection with motives, and it takes time for motives to enter one's knowledge. In the end, we come to know ourselves as something entirely different from what we took ourselves to be *a priori*, and then we are often terrified by ourselves.

Repentance arises from a change in knowledge, never from a change in the will, which is impossible. I must continue to will that which is essential and true in what I have ever willed, for I myself *am* this will, which lies beyond time and alteration. So I can never repent of what I have *willed*, but I can repent of what I have *done*, if I have—misled by mistaken concepts—done something that was not in accord with my will. The insight that this has happened—an insight produced by more accurate knowledge—is repentance. This extends not merely to

- worldly wisdom,
- the choice of means, and
- assessing whether my goals conform to my true will,

but also to the truly ethical. Thus, for example, I may have acted more egoistically than fits with my character, led astray •by exaggerated presentations of the hardship I was undergoing, or of the cunning, falsehood, malice of others, or •by acting too hastily, i.e. without deliberation, determined not by motives that I clearly knew *in abstracto* but by merely perceptual ones, by the present impression and the emotion it aroused, which was so strong that I wasn't really in possession of my reason. The return of reflection is in this case only a correction of knowledge. Repentance can come from this, and always presents itself as setting things right as far as possible. . . .

The contrary of that case can also occur: I may have been misled into acting *less* egoistically than fits with my character •by too much trust in others, •by ignorance of the relative values of worldly goods, or •by some abstract dogma that I have since lost faith in, and this can provide me with repentance of a different sort. [The different sort is mere *regret*, which was a possible translation of the word *Reue* throughout.] So *Reue*—repentance or regret—is always corrected knowledge about how an action was related to one's true intention.

When the will reveals its ideas in space alone, i.e. through mere form, it is opposed by the matter in which other ideas (in this case natural forces) already hold sway, and it is seldom able to get the form that is striving after visibility to appear in perfect purity and clarity. i.e. in perfect beauty. And there's an analogous hindrance to the will that reveals itself in time alone, i.e. through actions, the hindrance coming from knowledge that seldom gives it the data quite correctly, so that an action doesn't exactly correspond to the will—which leads to repentance. So repentance always

comes from corrected knowledge, not from the change of the will, which is impossible. Anguish of conscience over past deeds is nothing like repentance. It is pain at the knowledge of what one is in oneself, i.e. as will. It rests precisely on the certainty that one does always have the same will. [AS's explanation of this is defeatingly obscure. He says he will go into it in detail later on.]

The influence that knowledge (as the medium for motives) has—not indeed on will itself but on how it shows in conduct—is also the source of the main difference between the conduct of human beings and that of animals, because their ways of knowing are different. An animal has only perceptual knowledge, whereas a human being also has knowledge through reason, abstract presentations, concepts. Thus, while both are determined with equal necessity by motives, the human being has (and the animal lacks) the advantage of full *decision-making*. This has often been viewed as a freedom of the will in individual deeds, though it is really nothing but the possibility of a full-scale battle among several motives, the strongest of which then determines the will with necessity. For this to happen, motives have to take the form of abstract thoughts; for only through these can there be any real deliberation, i.e. any weighing of opposing grounds for action. For an animal the choice has to be between motives that are perceptually available, which limits it to the narrow sphere of its present perceptual intake. So the necessity in the determination of the will by motives—which is the same as the necessity in the determination of effects by causes—can be perceptually and immediately displayed only in animals, and in this case the motives are as immediately evident to the spectator as are their effects; whereas with human beings the motives are almost always abstract presentations to which the spectator has no access; and even for the agent himself the necessity of the motives'

effect is hidden behind their conflict. For only *in abstracto* can several presentations, such as judgments and chains of inferences, lie side by side in consciousness and—free from all temporal determination—interact until the strongest overpowers the others and determines the will. This is full *decision-making*—or capacity for deliberation—which is an advantage that human beings have over animals. It's on account of this that freedom of the will has been attributed to humans, on the supposition that their willing is a mere result of the operation of •the intellect, with no determinate drive serving as •its basis; whereas really motivation is effectual on the basis of the will's determinate drive, which with a human being is something individual, i.e. a character. [AS says that this matter gets 'a more detailed account' in his earlier *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, which he advises us to read. Then:] Humans' capacity for deliberation is one of the things that make their existence so much more of a torment than that of animals, just as in general our greatest pains lie not •in the present, as perceptual presentations or immediate feelings, but •in reason, as abstract concepts, tormenting thoughts, from which animals—living only in the present, and thus with enviable unconcern—are utterly free.

This dependence of the human capacity for deliberation on the faculty for thinking *in abstracto*—and thus for judging and inferring as well—seems to have been what misled both Descartes and Spinoza into identifying decisions of the will with the capacity for affirming and denying (the faculty of judgment), from which Descartes concluded that will—which he regarded as indifferently free—had some responsibility for all theoretical error. Spinoza, on the other hand, held that will is necessarily determined by motives, as judgments are necessitated by their grounds. The latter opinion has something right about it, but it shows up ·in his work· as a true conclusion from false premises.

The difference between how animals are moved by motives and how humans are has a far-reaching influence on the nature of both, and is the main source of the pervasive and evident difference in the existence of both. Namely:

- Animals are never motivated by anything but perceptual presentations, whereas
- humans try to exclude this sort of motivation entirely, and to be determined only by abstract presentations. In this they are making the best possible use of their prerogative of *reason*: independently of the present, they don't choose passing enjoyments or evade passing pains, but give thought to the consequences of both.

In most cases—apart from entirely insignificant actions—we are determined by abstract, thought-out motives, not by present impressions. So every individual **a** *sacrifice* made for the moment is relatively light, but every **b** *renunciation* is terribly hard; because **a** the former concerns only the fleeting present, while **b** the latter bears on the future and therefore incorporates countless sacrifices as its equivalent. The cause of our pain, as of our pleasure, therefore lies mostly not in the real present but merely in abstract thoughts. These are often unbearable to us, inflicting torments compared with which all the sufferings of the animal world are minute. Even our physical pains are often not worse than such ·mental· torments; indeed, we ·sometimes· cause ourselves physical pains so as to direct our attention away from intense mental ones. . . .

Just because mental pain, as by far the greater, makes one insensible to physical pain, suicide becomes very easy for someone who is in despair or consumed by morbid depression, even if he had recoiled from thoughts about it at earlier times in pleasant circumstances. Similarly, the play of someone's *thoughts* wears out his body more often and more

strongly than *physical* hardships do. [AS elaborates this line of thought with •quotations from Epictetus and Seneca, •reference to an early German folk tale about someone who is ‘a superb caricature of human nature, laughing on his way uphill but crying on the way down’, and •an implausible explanation of the supposed fact that when a child has hurt himself he doesn’t start crying until someone commiserates with him.]

Such great differences in conduct and in suffering flow from the difference between animal and human ways of knowing. Further, the emergence of the distinct and decisive *individual* character that especially distinguishes human beings from animals (which have hardly any character except that of their species) is conditioned by choice among several motives, which is possible only by means of abstract concepts. For only after a choice has been made are the resolutions (which vary in different individuals) an indication of the individual character, which is different in each; whereas the actions of animals depends only on the presence or absence of impressions, supposing this impression to be in general a motive for its species.

And a final point: for a human being it is only a •decision—not a mere •desire—that is a valid sign of his character, for himself as for others; and only his action can reliably show him and others what decision he has made. The desire is merely a necessary consequence of a present impression, whether from an external stimulus or from a transient inner mood, and is therefore as devoid of deliberation as the action of animals, and so merely expresses the character of the •human• species, not the individual character, i.e. merely indicates what *man in general*, not the *individual* who has the desire, would be capable of doing. The deed alone—

because as human action it always needs a certain deliberation, and because humans are as a rule in

control of their reason, and. . .so make decisions in accordance with thought-out, abstract motives
—expresses the intelligible maxims of the person’s action, the result of his innermost willing, and occupies a position as a *letter* in relation to the *word* that designates his empirical character, which itself is only the temporal expression of his intelligible character. In a healthy mind, therefore, only deeds weigh on the conscience, not desires or thoughts. For only our deeds hold up to us the mirror of our will. . . .

[AS now briefly repeats most of what he has said about the necessity that governs the conduct of men and of animals, despite the differences he has discussed, and then moves to a new difference, attributing to human beings something that he regards as incomparably unlike anything animals are capable of. It involves ‘true freedom of will as *thing in itself*’, self-renunciation, and other strangenesses. He can’t present this clearly here, he says, but he’ll get to it ‘at the very end’, which seems to refer to chapter 68. He then turns to a falsehood that might be inferred from what he has said up to here, namely:]

It would be wasted effort to work at improving one’s character or at resisting the power of evil inclinations; it would be wiser to submit to the inevitable and go along with every inclination, including bad ones.

But this would be altogether the same sort of thing as we get with the doctrine of unavoidable fate. . . . Although everything can be viewed as irrevocably predetermined by fate, it is so only by means of the chain of causes. So it can never be determined that an effect will occur without its cause. So what is predetermined is not the event plain and simple, but the event as an effect of a previous cause; so what is decided by fate is not the result alone but also the means by which the result is determined to occur. Accordingly, should the means not occur, then surely neither will the result: both of

them always occur in accordance with the determination of fate—which, however, we never know until afterwards.

Just as events always turn out according to fate, i.e. according to the endless chain of causes, so our actions will always turn out according to our intelligible character. But just as we don't know events in advance, so too we are given no insight *a priori* into our actions; we come to know others only *a posteriori*, through experience, and that's our only way of knowing ourselves. If it were an upshot of the intelligible character that we could make a good decision only after long battle against an evil inclination, then the battle would have to come first and its outcome waited for. Reflection on the unalterability of character, on the unity of the source all of our actions, shouldn't mislead us into anticipating the character's decision in favour of one side over the other; the eventual decision will show us what sort of person we are; we'll be mirrored in our deeds. That explains the •satisfaction or •anguish of soul with which we look back on the path of the life we have laid behind us. Neither of them comes from the past actions' still having an existence; they are past, have been, and now are no more. Their great importance for us comes from their meaning, comes from the fact that these actions are the imprint of character, the mirror of the will, into which we look and recognise our innermost self, the kernel of our will. Because we learn this only after the fact, we have to strive and do battle over time so that the picture we produce by our actions may be one we can view with calm rather than anxiety. Later on I'll inquire into the significance of this consolation or anguish of soul. . . .

•ACQUIRED CHARACTER•

Besides the intelligible and empirical characters, there's a third one, the **acquired** character. A person acquires this in the course of his life, through practice in worldly affairs; it's

what people are speaking of when they praise someone for having character or censure him for lacking it.

One might think that since the empirical character (as the phenomenon of the intelligible character) is unalterable and—like every natural phenomenon—internally consistent, a human being must always appear self-consistent and therefore have no need to *construct* a character through experience and reflection. But that is not how things stand. Although he is always the same, he does not always understand himself, and often mistakes himself until he has **acquired** some degree of genuine self-knowledge. The empirical character is, as a mere natural drive, in itself irrational; indeed its expressions are even disturbed by reason, more so if the person is better endowed with thoughtful awareness and power of thinking. For these keep him fixated on what is fitting for *a human being in general* as the character of the species, and what is possible for him in that role to will and to achieve. This makes it harder for him to see what *he alone*—by virtue of his individuality—is willing and able to do. He finds in himself dispositions for all the various human endeavours and powers; but without experience he won't be clear about their various strengths in his individual case. And if he now applies himself to the only pursuits that fit his character, at certain moments and in certain moods he feels an inclination to take up flatly opposite pursuits that can't be combined with the others and must be entirely suppressed if he wants to follow the others undisturbed. For, just as our physical path on earth is always only a line, not a surface, so in life, if we want to grasp and possess one thing, we must leave countless others scattered on all sides, renouncing them. If we can't decide to do that, but (like children at a fair) grab at everything that stimulates us in passing, this is a perverse attempt to transform the line of our path into a surface; we then run a zigzag course, flit here and there like

a will-o'-the-wisp, and achieve nothing.

Or, to use another comparison, just as according to Hobbes's doctrine of right

everyone has an original right to everything but an exclusive right to nothing; though someone can obtain an exclusive right to particular things by renouncing his right to everything else, while others renounce their right to whatever he has chosen,

so is it in life, in which

some definite pursuit, whether it be aimed at pleasure, honour, wealth, science, art, or virtue, can be followed with seriousness and success only when all claims that are foreign to it are given up, when everything else is renounced.

Accordingly, the mere will and the mere ability are not sufficient; a man must also *know* what he wills, and *know* what he can do; only then will he show character, and only then can he accomplish something right. Until he achieves this, he is without character, despite the natural consistency of his empirical character. And although he must on the whole stay true to himself and run his course to the end, drawn by his guiding spirit [the German is *Dämon*], the path he'll follow won't be a perfectly straight line, but a wavering and uneven one. He'll vacillate, deviate, reverse direction, allow himself regret and pain; all of this because, in matters great and small, he sees so many things that he could achieve as a human being but doesn't yet know which of them are suitable for him in particular, can be done by him or enjoyed by him. So he will envy many persons for situations and relations that are suited to their characters but not to his, and in which he would •feel unhappy and perhaps even •be unable to survive. Just as fish thrive only in water, birds only in air, moles only under the earth, so every human being thrives only in the atmosphere suited to him; the air of

court life, for example, can't be breathed by everyone. From a lack of sufficient insight into all of this, many a person will engage in all sorts of failed attempts, will force •his character in individual matters but on the whole will have to yield to •it; and what he so laboriously achieves contrary to his nature—i.e. by his forcings—will give him no enjoyment; what he learns in this way will remain dead. This applies even to ethical matters. A deed too noble for the person's character—stemming not from pure immediate impulse, but from a concept, from a dogma—will through subsequent egoistic regret lose all merit even in his own eyes. *Velle non discitur*. Just as experience teaches us of the inflexibility of **others'** characters, before which we childishly believe that

by presenting things in a rational way, by begging and pleading, by example and generosity, we might bring someone to abandon his ways, to change his manner of action, to depart from his way of thinking, or even widen his abilities,

so it goes with **ourselves** as well. We must first learn from experience what we want and what we are capable of; until that happens, we don't know these things, are without character, and are often forced by hard blows from without to retrace our steps.

When we finally learn these things, we have acquired what is commonly called 'character', *acquired character*. So this is nothing but the most complete knowledge possible of our own individuality: it is abstract—and thus clear—knowledge of the unalterable properties of our own empirical character and of the measure and direction of our mental and physical forces, and thus of the totality of the strengths and weaknesses of our own individuality. This enables us to carry out—now with thoughtful awareness and methodically—the inherently unalterable role of our own person, which we had previously regarded as a kind of citizen without strict

norms for naturalisation; and to fill the gaps that whims or weaknesses cause in it under the guidance of fixed conceptions. We'll abide by these as though the role were something we had learned. We shall no longer fall into error through passing moods or impressions; we won't be distracted by the bitterness or sweetness of odd things we find along our path; we'll act without delay, without hesitation, without inconsistency. We will now no longer, as novices, wait, attempt, feel our way around, to see what we really want and really can do; we know this once and for all, and by applying general principles to individual cases in any matter of choice we'll arrive at once at a decision. We know our will in general, and don't allow moods or external demands to mislead us into individual decisions that are wholly opposed to it. Similarly, we know the nature and the measure of our strengths and weaknesses, and will thereby spare ourselves many pains. (For really the only pleasure is that of feeling that one is employing one's own strengths, and the greatest pain is a perceived lack of strengths where one needs them.) Having examined where our strengths and weaknesses lie, we will try to develop and make use of our conspicuous natural dispositions, always occupying ourselves where these are appropriate and useful, and avoiding pursuits that we have little natural aptitude for and that won't work for us. Only someone who has succeeded in this will—with constancy and complete thoughtful awareness—*be entirely himself*, and will never be left in the lurch by himself, because he will always have known what he could expect from himself. He will then often experience the pleasure of feeling his strengths, and seldom the pain of being reminded of his weaknesses. The latter reminder is a humiliation that causes the greatest mental pain; so it is easier to endure clear evidence of one's misfortune than of one's ineptitude.

Now that we are completely familiar with our strengths

and weaknesses, we won't try to display powers that we don't have—won't gamble with counterfeit coin—because such trickery eventually misses its target. For since the entire person is only the phenomenon of his will, nothing could be more perverse than to be led by reflection to want to be something other than what one is, for that is a direct contradiction of the will with itself. Imitating someone else's qualities and individual features is much more disgraceful than wearing someone else's clothes; for that is the judgment of one's own worthlessness pronounced by oneself. Knowledge of one's own disposition and abilities, and of their unalterable limits, is the surest way to achieve the greatest possible self-content; for it applies to inner circumstances as well as to outer ones that the only real consolation for us is the certainty that something was unalterably necessary. An ill that has befallen us doesn't torment us as much as the thought of the circumstances by which it could have been averted. So nothing comforts us more effectively than seeing events in terms of a necessity through which all contingencies appear as tools in the hand of a prevailing fate. . . .

Really, we wail or rage only for as long as we hope this will affect others or rouse ourselves to unprecedented exertion. But children and adults know very well to remain content, once they see clearly that there is no alternative. . . . We are like captured elephants that rage and struggle for many days, until they see that this is useless, and then suddenly offer their necks quietly to the yoke, forever tamed. We are like King David, who while his son was still alive besieged Jehovah with entreaties, and conducted himself as if in despair, but as soon as his son was dead gave him no further thought. [See 2 Samuel, 12:15–23.] That is how it comes about that persistent ills

such as being crippled, poor, low in status, ugly,

having a disgusting home are borne with indifference by countless people—and indeed, like healed wounds, are no longer felt—simply because those people know that inner or outer necessity permits no change in their condition; while more fortunate folk don't see how anyone can bear this. Now with inner necessity as with outer, nothing reconciles one so firmly as clear knowledge of it. If we have once and for all •clearly recognised our good qualities and strengths as well as our failings and weaknesses, •set our goal accordingly, and •come to be at peace over things that can't be achieved, this will give us the most secure escape that our individuality permits from the most bitter of all sorrows, *discontent with ourselves*, which is the inevitable result of •a lack of knowledge of one's own individuality, of •false conceit, and of •the over-reaching that arises from that. As Ovid wonderfully wrote: 'That is of the greatest help to the spirit, once and for all to break the bonds that entangle and torment one's breast.' [AS quotes this in Latin.]

So much for **acquired character**. It is indeed less important for ethics proper than for everyday life, but I needed to discuss it at length so as to fit it into its place as the third kind of character alongside intelligible character and empirical character. I have had to allow myself a somewhat detailed consideration of intelligible character, to make clear to us how will is subject to necessity *in all its phenomena*, although it can *in itself* be called free—indeed omnipotent.

56. Suffering and satisfaction

The whole visible world is the phenomenon of this freedom, this omnipotence, expressing it and progressively developing it in accordance with the laws that come with the form of knowledge; and now that in its most perfect manifestation it has reached the completely adequate knowledge of its own

nature, it can express itself in two new ways. Either

a it also wills here at the pinnacle of reflection and self-consciousness the same thing that it had been willing blindly and without self-knowledge; in which case knowledge is still a motive for it, on the whole as in matters of detail;

or the opposite of that:

b this knowledge becomes a *quieter* for it, stilling and nullifying all willing.

This is the **a** affirmation and **b** denial of the will for life that I have introduced in general terms above. . . . Which side of the **a/b** line someone is on doesn't affect the development of his character or show up in individual actions. Its only upshot is that the maxims the will has freely adopted (according to the knowledge now attained) vividly express themselves either in **a** ever stronger emergence of the individual's entire manner of action or—the opposite upshot of that—in **b** its nullification.

I have paved the way for a clearer development of all this—the main topic of this final Book—by inserting discussions of freedom, necessity, and character. Further help with the main topic will be given by another insertion, namely a consideration of life itself, the willing or non-willing of which is the great question. We should try to recognise in general terms •what this affirmation of life really means for will itself, which is after all life's innermost essence, •how and how far this ·affirmation· does or indeed *can* satisfy the will, in short, •what, in general and essential terms, is to be viewed as its [= will's] condition in this its own world, one in every respect belonging to it.

Firstly, I ask the reader to recall the considerations that I ended Book II with, arising from the question posed there concerning the goal and purpose of will. Instead of the answer to that question, it became clear to us that

will—on all the levels of its phenomenon from the lowest to the highest—is entirely devoid of any ultimate goal, is always striving because striving is its sole essence. It is not brought to a halt by the achievement of any goal: it is not capable of any final satisfaction; it can only be held up by impediments, but in itself goes on for ever. We saw this in the simplest of all natural phenomena, gravity, which doesn't cease to strive and press toward a mathematical centre, to reach which would be the annihilation of gravity and of matter, and wouldn't cease if the entire universe were already compressed into a ball. We see it in other simple natural phenomena. Anything solid strives, by melting or dissolving, towards a fluidity in which alone all its chemical forces will be liberated; rigidity is the imprisonment they are held in by cold. And fluid strives for the form of a vapour, which it passes into the moment it is freed from all pressure. No body is without. . . .striving, or without longing and desire, as Jakob Böhm would say. Electricity endlessly transmits its inner conflict, even if the mass of the earth absorbs its effect. Electromagnetism is likewise, so long as the battery lasts, a goal-less endlessly renewed act of conflict and reconciliation. The existence of plants is just the same sort of unrelenting, never satisfied striving, a ceaseless driving through ever higher forms until the •endpoint, the seed, becomes the •starting point again. This is repeated endlessly: never a goal, never final satisfaction, never a point of repose. At the same time you'll recall from Book II [chapter 26] that the multitude of natural forces and organic forms fight one another for the matter in which they would come to the fore, each possessing only what it has torn from another, so that a constant battle over life and death is maintained. . . .

We have long since recognised •this striving that constitutes the core and *in-itself* of every thing as identical with •that which in us—where it manifests itself most clearly in

the light of fullest consciousness—is called *will*. We then label as *suffering* a blockage of it that comes between it and its momentary goal, and as *satisfaction*, well-being, happiness, its achievement of the goal. We can carry these labels over to the phenomena of the insentient world, weaker in degree but identical in essence. We see these gripped by constant suffering, with no lasting happiness. For all striving arises from a lack, from discontent with one's state, and this is suffering so long as it is not satisfied. But no satisfaction is lasting; it is never anything but the starting point for some new striving. We see striving everywhere impeded, everywhere in battle, and thus always as suffering; no ultimate goal for the striving, so no measure and goal of suffering.

What we thus discover in insentient nature only through sharpened attention and effort confronts us clearly in sentient nature, in the life of the animal world, the constant suffering of which is easily demonstrable. But rather than lingering on this middle level, I prefer to turn to where everything—illuminated by the clearest knowledge—comes out most clearly, in the life of the human being. •Why most clearly there?• Because as the phenomenon of will becomes more complete, the suffering becomes more obvious. In plants there is no sensibility, and thus no pain. A very low degree of both is possessed by the lowest animals, infusoria and radiata; even in insects the capacity for feeling and suffering is still limited. Only with the complete nervous system of vertebrates do they occur to a high degree, and in higher degree as intelligence is more highly developed. In equal measure, then, as knowledge acquires clarity, as consciousness rises higher, there also grows that torment which consequently reaches its highest degree in human beings. The more clearly a man knows, and the more intelligent he is, the more he suffers; and the one in whom

genius lives suffers the most. . . .

This exact proportion between level of consciousness and level of suffering has been beautifully expressed. . . . in a drawing by the philosophical painter, or painting philosopher, Tischbein. The upper half of the picture depicts *women* whose children are being abducted and who in various groups and postures express deep maternal pain, anxiety, despair. The lower half of the picture shows, in entirely the same order and grouping, *sheep* from whom their lambs are being taken; so that every human head, every human posture, in the upper half of the picture corresponds to an animal analogue below; so that one sees clearly how the pain that is possible within a dull animal consciousness relates to the intense torment that becomes possible only through clarity of knowledge, vividness of consciousness.

For these reasons, I want to consider the inner and essential fate of will *within human existence*. Everyone will easily find the same thing expressed in the life of animals. . . ., and will gather even from their case how essential suffering is to all life.

57. Life, death, suffering, boredom

At every level illuminated by knowledge, *will* appears as an individual. The human individual finds himself launched into infinite space and infinite time as a finite quantity, and compared with them a vanishingly small one. Because of *their* unlimitedness, he always has only a relative and never an absolute *When* and *Where* for his existence; for his place and his duration are finite parts of something infinite and limitless.

His real existence is only in the present, whose unimpeded flight into the past is a steady passage into death, a constant dying, since his past life is already utterly done

with, dead, no longer existent—apart from any consequences it may have for the present, and apart from the witness it bears to his will. So from a rational point of view it can't matter to him whether the content of that past was torments or pleasures. But the present is constantly passing through his hands into the past; the future is quite uncertain and always brief. Thus his existence, just viewed from the **formal** side, is a constant plunging of the present into the dead past, a constant dying. But if we see it from the **physical** side as well, it's obvious that just as **(i)** our walking is known to be a constantly prevented falling, so also **(ii)** the life of our body is only a continually prevented dying, an ever-postponed death, and **(iii)** the mobility of our mind is a continually deferred boredom. Every breath wards off the constant intrusion of death, with which we do battle in this way every second, and then again at greater intervals with every meal, every sleep, every warming, etc. It must win eventually, for we became subject to it by being born, and it merely plays with its prey for a while before devouring it! Yet we go on with our life with considerable engagement and much care, for as long as possible—like making a soap-bubble as long-lasting and as large as possible, although we know for sure that it will burst.

We have seen the inner being of insentient nature as a constant striving, without a goal and without rest; and we see the same thing even more clearly when we consider the animal and the human being. [In what follows, the use of 'his' and 'he' suggests that the topic is the human being, not the (non-human) animal. The German pronouns in the original don't carry that suggestion; but the passage as a whole is more plausible when read as focussed on humans.] Willing and striving is his whole nature, strictly comparable with an unquenchable thirst. But the basis of all willing is need, deficiency, and thus pain, to which the human has fallen subject—in his origin and through his very

being. If he lacks objects of desire because the desires he had were too easily satisfied, then a frightful emptiness and boredom befalls him—i.e. his nature and his very existence become an unbearable burden to him. His life thus swings like a pendulum between pain and boredom, both of which are in fact ultimate constituents of it. This is expressed oddly in the saying that after man had transferred all sufferings and torments into hell, nothing then remained for heaven but boredom.

The constant striving that constitutes the essence of every phenomenon of will obtains its primary and most general foundation at the higher levels of objectification from the fact that here the will manifests itself as a living body, with the iron command **(i) to nourish this body**; and what gives force to this command is the fact that this body is nothing but the objectified *will to live* itself. The human being, as the most complete objectification of that will, is accordingly the neediest of all beings: he is through and through willing and needing, a concretion of a thousand needs. With these he stands on the earth, left to himself, uncertain about everything except his need and his hardship. Accordingly, concern for maintenance of his existence—amid such heavy and daily-renewed demands—fills as a rule the whole of his life. A second demand is immediately joined to this: the demand **(ii) to propagate the species**. At the same time the most diverse dangers threaten him from all sides, and to escape them he needs to be constantly on the alert. He follows his path with cautious steps, anxiously looking around, because a thousand risks and a thousand enemies lie in wait for him. Thus he went as a savage; thus he goes in civilised life. There is no security for him:

In what shadows of life, in what great dangers,
Is this lifetime lived, as long as it lasts!

[From Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, quoted by AS in Latin.]

For the great majority, life is a constant battle for this existence itself, with the certainty of its eventually being lost. What enables them to endure in this so-arduous battle is not so much *love of life* as *fear of death*, which, however, stands inexorably in the background and can at any moment step forward.

Life itself is a sea full of reefs and whirlpools that a person avoids with great caution and care, although he knows that even if his efforts and skill succeed in getting him through it, every step brings him closer to the greatest, the total, the unavoidable and unsalvageable shipwreck—death. This is for him the final goal of that arduous journey, and worse for him than all the reefs he has avoided.

It is very noteworthy, though, that •on the one hand the sufferings and torments of someone's life can easily increase to the point where even the death that his entire life consists in a flight from becomes desirable, and he voluntarily rushes towards it; and •on the other hand, as soon as someone gets a respite from hardship and suffering, boredom is at once so near at hand that he is in dire need of something to pass the time. What occupies all living things and keeps them going is striving for existence. But when existence is assured to them, they don't know what to do with it. So the second thing that gets them going is striving to be rid of the burden of existence, becoming insensible to it, 'killing time', i.e. escaping boredom. . . .

But boredom is not at all a minor evil; it eventually paints one's face with real despair. It is responsible for the fact that beings who have no love for one another seek each other out, so that it becomes the source of ·their· sociability. Governmental precautions against a boredom are adopted everywhere, as against other general calamities, because this evil—as much its opposite extreme, ь starvation—can drive people to the greatest excesses. The people need *Panem*

et Circenses [Latin for 'bread and circuses']. The strict penitentiary system of Philadelphia uses solitary confinement and inactivity to make sheer boredom an instrument of punishment; and it's such a frightful one that it has led inmates to suicide. Just as **w**ant is the constant scourge of the ·common· people, so **a** boredom is that of the fashionable world. . . .

Every human life flows on always between desiring and achieving. Desire is by its nature pain; its achievement quickly gives birth to satiety. The goal was only illusory; achievement of it stops it from tickling; the desire, the need, starts again in a new form. Where it doesn't, there follows desolation, emptiness, boredom, the battle against which is just as tormenting as that against hardship.

When desire and satisfaction alternate without too short or too long an interval between them, that reduces to its lowest degree the suffering that both provide, and makes for the happiest course of life. For what one might otherwise call the finest part of life, its purest joy (if only because it lifts us out of real existence and transforms us into disengaged spectators of it)—namely •the pure knowledge that remains foreign to all willing, •pleasure from the beautiful, •genuine delight in art, is granted to only a few because it demands rare talents, and even to these it is granted only as a passing dream. These few, on account of their higher intellectual power, are susceptible to far greater suffering than duller minds can ever feel, and are placed in lonely isolation among a variety of beings markedly different from them. . . . For the vast majority of people, purely intellectual pleasures are not accessible. They are almost entirely incapable of the joys of pure knowledge; they are wholly given up to willing. So if something is to win their sympathy—to be *interesting* to them—it must. . . . somehow arouse their will. It may do this only through a distant and merely problematic reference

to it, but the will can never remain entirely out of play, because such people's existence lies far more in willing than in knowing; action and reaction are their single element. [AS gives examples of trivial activities that ordinary folk are led to by this, rising to a climax:] This need for arousal of the will shows itself in the invention and preservation of card games, which is quite truly an expression of the pitiful side of humanity.

But whatever **a** nature, whatever **w** fortune may have done, whoever one **a** is and whatever one **w** possesses, the pain essential to life cannot be cast off. [This is decorated with short quotations from *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.]

The ceaseless efforts to get rid of suffering accomplish nothing beyond altering its form. Its basic form is

•deficiency, need, concern for the maintenance of life. If one has the good fortune (which probably won't last long) to suppress pain in this form, it immediately starts up in a thousand other forms, varying according to age and circumstances, such as

- the sex drive,
- passionate love,
- jealousy,
- envy,
- hatred,
- anxiety,
- ambition,
- avarice,
- illness,

etc., etc. If pain can't find entry in any other form, it arrives in the sad gray raiment of surfeit and boredom, against which all sorts of things are then tried. If one finally succeeds in driving these off, that will probably readmit pain in one of its earlier forms, and so re-starting the dance; for every human life is tossed back and forth between pain and boredom.

Depressing as this view of life is, I call attention in passing to an aspect of it from which consolation may be drawn—perhaps, indeed, giving one a Stoic indifference towards threatening evils. The main reason we don't patiently put up with these is that we see them as having been avoidable, brought about by a causal chain that could easily have been different. For we don't let ourselves be troubled by ills that are perfectly general and are immediately necessary in the way that aging, death, and many daily discomforts are. What gives a suffering its sting is viewing as avoidable the circumstances that brought it to us. But when we have recognised that

pain as such is essential to life and unavoidable; nothing beyond its bare shape—the form in which it is displayed—depends on chance; so that our present suffering fills a place into which, without it, some other evil that is now excluded from it would at once enter;

so that fate can do little to us in essentials, such a reflection, if it became a living conviction, might produce a high degree of Stoic equanimity, and lessen our concern for our own welfare. But in fact such a powerful control of reason over directly felt suffering seldom if ever occurs.

·A STRANGE BUT NOT ABSURD HYPOTHESIS·

This thought...might lead one to the hypothesis—paradoxical but not absurd—that every individual's measure of pain is determined by his nature once and for all, a measure that could neither remain empty nor grow overfull, however much the *form* of suffering varies. So his suffering and well-being would be settled not by external factors but only by that predetermined measure, that disposition. He might indeed experience occasional ups and downs on account of his physical condition, but ·his welfare-level·

would on the whole remain the same and be nothing other than what one calls his temperament or, more exactly, the degree to which he is, as Plato expresses it in the *Republic*, 'easily or with difficulty contented'.

This hypothesis is supported by **(i)** the familiar experience that •great suffering makes us entirely unable to feel all lesser suffering, and conversely that •in the absence of great suffering even the slightest discomforts torment us and foul our mood. And by **(ii)** the experience that •when a great misfortune occurs—one that we had previously shuddered at the mere thought of—as soon as we overcome the initial pain our mood is on the whole quite unaltered; and conversely that •after the occurrence of something good that we had for some time longed for, we don't enduringly feel significantly better off or more contented than before. [AS goes on to explain that our joy at hoped-for goods and sorrow at feared evils] soon vanish, because they rested on a deception. For they arise not from the immediately present pleasure or pain but only from the prospect of a new future that is anticipated in them. Only by virtue of the fact that pain and pleasure are borrowed from the future could they get so abnormally heightened, and consequently not last long.

Further confirmation of the hypothesis I am examining—namely that

feelings of suffering or well-being are largely determined subjectively and *a priori*, as is knowledge—is found in **(iii)** the fact that human cheerfulness and gloom are obviously not determined by external circumstances, by wealth or class, since we encounter at least as many happy faces among the poor as among the wealthy, and in **(iv)** the diversity of the motives that lead people to suicide. We can cite no misfortune great enough to lead—or even be likely to lead—every character to suicide, and few so slight that no-one has ever been led to suicide by something like

them. So changes in our level of cheerfulness and gloom are due to changes not in our external circumstances but rather in our inner state, our physical condition. When our cheerfulness increases (never for long!), even to the point of joy, it usually appears without any external occasion. We do indeed often see our pain as coming solely from our relation to •something outside ourselves, and are visibly oppressed and troubled only by •that; we think that if only •it were removed, the greatest contentment would surely occur. But this is illusion. . . .

Without that particular external cause, the pain—grounded in our being for this period of time, and thus unshakable—would make its appearance in the form of a hundred little annoyances and cares over things we now entirely overlook because our capacity for pain is already filled with that main evil, which has concentrated in one point all the sufferings that would otherwise be scattered. This also squares with (♥) the observation that when a great and pressing care is lifted from our breast by a fortunate outcome, another care immediately takes its place. The entire material for it was already there, but could not enter consciousness as a care because consciousness had no capacity left for it. . . . Now that a place has been made for it, this ready-in-waiting material at once steps forth and takes the throne as the ruling concern of the day. Even if it is much lighter than the material of the concern that has just vanished, it can inflate itself enough to equal the other in apparent magnitude; and so, as the main concern of the day, it completely fills the throne.

Excessive pleasure and very intense pain always occur in the same person; for the two condition one another and are also jointly conditioned by great activity of mind. Both are produced, as we have just found, not by what is purely present but by anticipation of the future. But since pain is

essential to life and its degree [= level of intensity] is determined by the nature of the subject, its degree can't be caused by *sudden* changes because they are always external. It follows that error and delusion always lie at the foundation of excessive joy or pain; so that these two strains on the mind can be avoided through insight. Every excessive joy rests on the delusion that one has found in life something that it flatly doesn't contain, namely, lasting satisfaction of the harassing desires and cares which ·in fact· constantly breed new ones. One must inevitably be brought away from *each* delusion of this sort; and when it vanishes one must pay for it with pains as bitter as the pleasure of its arrival was keen. It is just like a height from which one can come down only by falling, and which therefore ought to have been avoided. And every sudden, excessive pain is only a fall from such a height, the vanishing of such a delusion and so conditioned by it. So someone could avoid both ·excesses· if he had enough self-control always to survey things with utter clarity both globally and in detail, and to guard steadfastly against thinking that they actually have the colours that he would like them to have. Stoic ethics was above all concerned with freeing one's mind from all such delusion and its consequences, replacing it with unshakable equanimity. This insight inspires Horace in the familiar verse:

Keep it in mind in arduous affairs
To preserve equanimity, and in good fortune
To refrain from excessive joy.

Usually, however, we shut ourselves off from knowledge of the fact that, comparable to a bitter medicine, suffering is essential to life and therefore does not come flowing to us from outside, but everyone carries about its indomitable source in his own inner being. For the pain that never leaves us we seek always an external individual cause, like

a pretext, just as a free man fashions an idol for himself in order to have a master. For we work tirelessly from desire to desire; and

although every satisfaction that we attain, however much it had promised, fails to satisfy us and usually soon stands before us as a humiliating error,

we still don't see that we are drawing water with the leaking vessel of the Danaïds, but hurry on to ever new desires. [AS here quotes three lines from Lucretius, saying the same thing, and then continues:] So it goes on, either endlessly or—what is rarer, and indeed presupposes a certain strength of character—until we reach a desire that can't be satisfied yet can't be given up. When that happens, we have in a way found what we were seeking, namely something that we can blame (instead of our own nature) as the source of our sufferings; this puts us at variance with our fate, but reconciles us with our existence, for it distances us from the knowledge that suffering is essential to that very existence and true satisfaction is impossible. This final development results in a somewhat melancholy mood, the constant endurance of a single great pain and the resultant minimising of all lesser sufferings or pleasures. It is a worthier phenomenon than the more usual constant snatching after ever new phantoms.

58. Each person's life is a tragedy

All satisfaction, or what is commonly called 'happiness', is always really and essentially negative, never positive. It is not a gratification that comes to us originally and of itself, but must always be the satisfaction of a desire. For desire, i.e. lack, is the antecedent condition of every enjoyment. But when satisfaction comes, the desire and thus the pleasure cease. So satisfaction or gratification can never be more than liberation from a pain, from a hardship. For pain goes not

only with •every actual visible suffering but also with •every desire, the nagging of which disturbs our calm, and indeed even with •the deadening boredom that makes our existence a burden.

But it is so difficult to achieve anything and carry it through; every project runs up against endless difficulties and troubles, and with every step the obstacles increase. And when everything is finally overcome and attained, all that can be achieved is •being freed from some suffering, or some desire and •reverting the state one was in before this suffering or desire happened.

What is directly given is always only a lack, i.e. a pain. We can be aware of satisfaction and pleasure only indirectly, through recollection of the preceding suffering and want that ended with the arrival of the satisfaction. Because of this, we are never properly aware of the goods and advantages we actually possess, and don't prize them, but think of them merely as a matter of course, for they gratify us only negatively by holding suffering at bay. Only after we have lost them do we feel their value; for the positive thing that communicates itself directly to us is the want, the privation, the sorrow; so that we are pleased at the recollection of some hardship, sickness, lack, etc. that we have overcome, because that's our only way of enjoying present goods. And it can't be denied that in this respect and from this standpoint of egoism—which is the form of the will for life—the sight or description of the sufferings of others gives us satisfaction and pleasure in precisely the way that Lucretius finely and openly pronounces it in his *De rerum natura*:

Pleasant, when the stormy seas are raging,
To view another's mighty labours from land;
Not because viewing another's vexations is a happy
pleasure,

But because it is pleasant to think of oneself as having avoided those ills.

However, we'll see in chapter 65 that this sort of pleasure from awareness of well-being mediated in this way lies very close to the source of real positive malice.

·The thesis I have been discussing, namely·

That all happiness is only of a negative, not of a positive nature, that it can just for that reason not be lasting satisfaction and gratification, but always only redeems one from some pain or lack—upon which either a new pain, or even languor, empty longing and boredom, must follow

finds confirmation in that true mirror of the nature of the world and of life, namely in art, especially poetry. An epic or dramatic poem can depict only a wrestling, striving, and battling for happiness, but never lasting and complete happiness. It conducts its hero to his goal through a thousand difficulties and dangers; once the goal is reached, the poem quickly lets the curtain fall. ·Why?· Because the only thing left for it to show is that the dazzling goal in which the hero had dreamed of finding happiness had only mocked him, and he was no better off after achieving it than he had been before. Because real lasting happiness is impossible, it can't be a subject for art. Certainly the aim of the idyll is to describe such happiness; but we see that the idyll as such cannot be sustained. It always becomes in the poet's hands either **(i)** a would-be heroic narrative, and is then a most insignificant 'epic' assembled from trivial sufferings, trivial pleasures, and trivial endeavours (this being the most usual case) or **(ii)** merely descriptive poetry, portraying the beauty

of nature, i.e. pure knowing free from will.¹ This is indeed the only pure happiness, not preceded by suffering or need, and not necessarily followed by regret, suffering, emptiness, surfeit; but this happiness can't fill one's entire life—only moments of it.

What we see in poetry we find again in music, in the melody of which I have recognised [chapter 52] the innermost history of self-conscious will expressed in general terms—the human heart's most secret life, longing, suffering and joy, ebbing and flowing. Melody is always deviation from the tonic,² through a thousand whimsical meanderings up to the point of the most painful dissonance, after which it finally rediscovers the tonic, which expresses satisfaction and calming of the will. Nothing more can be done with that, and a prolonged continuation of it would be a burdensome and unexpressive monotone, corresponding to boredom.

Everything that these considerations should make clear—the unachievability of lasting satisfaction and the negative character of all happiness—finds its explanation in what is shown at the conclusion of Book II, namely that will—of which human life (just like any phenomenon) is an objectification—is a striving without goal and without end.

We find the stamp of this endlessness on all parts of its phenomenon, from •the phenomenon's most general form, endless time and space, to •the most accomplished of all phenomena, the life and striving of the human being.

We can theoretically identify three extremes of human life and regard them as elements of actual human life. [AS gives them names drawn from Hindu and Sikh philosophy, without explaining

¹ [Perhaps he means that *the focussed enjoyment of* this kind of poetry is pure knowing etc.]

² [*Grundton*; it could be translated as 'keynote'.]

that that's what they are.] **(i)** (Radscha-Guna). Powerful will, great passions. This shows up in great historical characters; it is depicted in epic and drama. But it can also appear in the little world, because the size of objects is measured here only by how greatly they move the will, not by their external relations. **(ii)** (Satwa-Guna). Pure knowing, the grasp of ideas, brought about by freeing knowledge from service to the will; the life of genius. **(iii)** (Tama-Guna). The greatest lethargy of the will and of the knowledge bound to it, empty longing, life-benumbing boredom. The life of the individual, far from remaining in any of these extremes, seldom touches any of them, and is usually only a weak and vacillating approximation to this or that side, a needy willing of trivial objects, constantly recurring and so escaping from boredom.

It's really incredible how

- unexpressive¹ and insignificant, viewed from the outside, and how
- dull and unreflective, felt from within,

is the course of life of the vast majority of human beings. It is a weary longing and torment, a dreamlike stumble toward death through the four stages of life, in the company of a series of trivial thoughts. They are like clockworks that have been wound up and are running, without knowing why; and every time a human being is begotten and born, the clock of human life is wound up again so as to repeat—measure for measure and beat for beat, with insignificant variations—the music-box tune it has already played right through countless times. . . .

The life of every individual, surveyed on the whole and in general, with emphasis only on its most significant features, is really always a tragedy; but when gone through in detail,

it has the character of a comedy.² For

the doings and troubles of the day, the restless irritation of the moment, the desires and fears of the week, the misfortunes of every hour

all come about through chance, which is always bent on its tricks, and are sheer scenes from a comedy. But the desires never fulfilled, the frustrated efforts, the hopes mercilessly trampled by fate, the unhappy errors of a lifetime, with increasing suffering and death at the end, always amount to a tragedy. Thus, as if fate wanted to add *mockery* to the sorrows of our existence, our lives contain all the woes of a tragedy though we can't maintain the dignity of tragic figures; rather, the details of our lives are those of inescapably foolish comic characters.

Troubles great and small fill every human life, keeping it in constant unrest and movement; but they can't conceal •life's inability to satisfy the mind, •the emptiness and shallowness of existence; and they can't exclude boredom, which is always ready to fill every gap left by the absence of concern. That's how it has come about that the human mind, still not content with the concerns, worries, and occupations that the actual world lays on it, creates for itself an imaginary world in the shape of a thousand different superstitions, and busies itself with this in all sorts of ways, wasting time and energy on it, whenever the actual world would grant it the rest that it is absolutely unable to have. This is most often the case with peoples for whom life is made easy by the mildness of climate and earth—especially the Hindus, then the Greeks, the Romans, and later the Italians, Spanish, etc.

Man creates guiding spirits, gods, and saints in his own image. To these he must constantly offer sacrifices, prayers,

¹ [*nichtsagend*, 'saying nothing']

² [In this sentence, 'tragedy' and 'comedy' translate the German *Trauerspiel* and *Lustspiel*: the topic in each case is a tragic or comical *play* (*spiel*).]

temple adornments, oaths and their fulfillment, pilgrimages, salutations, decoration of images, etc. Service to them is everywhere interwoven with reality, indeed darkens it; every event in life is then interpreted as a response of those beings to something humans have done. Engagement with them occupies half one's time, constantly supports one's hopes, and often—through the charm of the deception—becomes more interesting than engagement with real beings. It is the expression and the symptom of humanity's double need, **a** for help and support and **b** for occupation and amusement; and even if it often works directly against **a** the first need—when confronted by misfortunes and dangers, wasting precious time and energy on prayers and sacrifices instead of averting the dangers—it serves **b** the second need all the better by these imaginary dealings with a dreamed-up spirit-world. And this is the gain—a not inconsiderable one—from all superstitions.

59. More on the misery of life

Having convinced ourselves. . . *a priori* that the entire make-up of human life makes it incapable of true happiness and a scene of suffering and thorough misery, we could now awaken this conviction to a greater liveliness within ourselves by proceeding in a more *a posteriori* manner, turning to more definite instances, calling up pictures to the imagination, and illustrating by examples the unspeakable misery which experience and history present, wherever we look and in whatever direction we explore. But there would be no end to that, and it would distance us from the universal standpoint that is essential to philosophy. [Another drawback of that procedure, AS adds, is that it might be accused of being biased in its selection of examples, a charge that can't be brought against his *a priori* demonstration because *it* is

wholly universal and doesn't rely on particular examples. He says that there's no shortage of particulars that could nourish the *a posteriori* approach, and he goes on about them almost rapturously. He winds up this passage with something that might be self-referential:] Excellence of any sort is always only an exception, one case out of millions. So if it becomes known in a lasting work, once that has survived the animosity of its contemporaries, it stands isolated, stored away like a meteorite originating from an order of things other than the one that holds sway here.

As concerns the life of the individual, however, every story of a life is a story of suffering. For the course of each life is, as a rule, a continuing series of great and small misfortunes, which indeed everyone does his best to conceal because he knows that others won't often feel sympathy or compassion but almost always satisfaction over woes that they are spared at that moment. But perhaps no-one at the end of his life, if he is thoughtful and honest, will want to go through it again, and will rather choose complete annihilation. The essential content of the world-famous soliloquy in *Hamlet* boils down to this: *Our state is such a miserable one that complete nonexistence would be preferable to it.* And if suicide actually offered this—so that the alternatives 'to be or not to be' (in the full sense of those words) lay before us—then it would be absolutely the choice to make, as a 'consummation devoutly to be wish'd' [AS quotes this in English]. But something in us says that this is not so; suicide is not the end; death is not absolute annihilation. Likewise, what the father of history [Herodotus] in fact says has surely not since been refuted, namely, that there has never been anyone who didn't more than once wish not to experience the next day. Accordingly, the so often lamented brevity of life might perhaps be precisely the best thing about it!

If someone had a clear view of the horrific pains and

torments that his life is constantly open to, he would be gripped by dread. And if the most stubborn optimist were taken through

- hospitals, infirmaries and surgical operating-rooms, through
- prisons, torture-chambers and slaves' quarters, over
- battlefields and scenes of execution, then
- all the dark dwellings of misery where it evades the glances of cool curiosity, and finally
- looking into the starving dungeon of Ugolino,¹

then surely he too would in the end see what sort of *meilleur des mondes possibles*² this is. After all, where did Dante get the material for his hell if not from this actual world of ours? And his is a thoroughly well-done hell! Whereas, when he came to the task of depicting heaven and its pleasures, Dante encountered an insuperable difficulty; for our world offers absolutely no materials for such a thing. So all he could do was to use—instead of the pleasures of paradise—the instruction he received there from his ancestor, his Beatrice, and various saints. But from this it is made clear enough what sort of world this is. Of course, with human life as with any bad commodity, the exterior is coated with false glitter; the suffering part is always kept concealed. Everyone makes a show of whatever pomp and splendour he can manage; and the more he lacks inner contentment, the more anxious he is to strike others as a fortunate man. That's how far folly stretches; and the opinion of others is a major goal of everyone's striving, although its entire nullity is already expressed through the fact that in almost all languages 'vanity', *vanitas*, originally meant emptiness and nullity.

But even beneath all this deception, life's torments can

easily become so great—and it happens daily—that the death that is otherwise feared above all is eagerly grasped at. Indeed, when fate shows its whole malice, even this refuge of death can be barred to the sufferer, leaving him—in the hands of angry enemies—subjected to cruel, slow tortures without rescue. In vain does this victim of torment call to his gods for help; he remains at the mercy of his fate, without reprieve. But his hopelessness in this situation is an exact mirror of the unstoppable will, of which his person is the objectivisation. Little as an external power can change or nullify this will, just as little can any outside force free it from the torments that come from the life that is the will's phenomenon. In the principal matter, as in everything else, a man is always thrown back upon himself. In vain does he make gods for himself in order to get from them by prayers and flattery what can only be accomplished by his own will-power. The Old Testament made the world and man the work of a god, while the New Testament, so as to teach that salvation and redemption from the sorrow of this world can only come from itself, was forced to have that god become man. Fanatics, martyrs, saints of every faith and name, have voluntarily and gladly endured every torture, because in them the will to live had suppressed itself; and then even the slow destruction of its phenomenon was welcome to them. But I do not wish to anticipate the later exposition.

I can't refrain from declaring here that *optimism* seems to me—where it is not the mindless talk of those whose low foreheads house nothing but words—to be not merely an absurd way of thinking but even a downright *wicked* one, a bitter mockery of mankind's unspeakable sufferings.—Don't think

¹ [A reference to an episode in Dante's *Inferno* in which an aristocrat and his sons are all starved to death.]

² ['best of [all] possible worlds'; a phrase used by Voltaire, satirising a supposedly optimistic doctrine of Leibniz's]

that the doctrine of Christian faith favours optimism; for in the Gospels *world* and *evil* are used as nearly synonymous expressions.

60. Mainly about the sex drive

I have finished discussing two issues that I had to insert, **(i)** regarding freedom of the *will in itself* along with the necessity of its phenomenon, and **(ii)** regarding its lot in the world that mirrors its nature, and through the knowledge of which it has to affirm or deny itself. With that done, I can deal more clearly with this affirmation and denial; up to here I have stated and explained them only in general terms, but now I can •depict in more detail• the ways of behaving that express them, and •consider them with respect to their inner significance.

Affirmation of will is constant willing, undisturbed by any knowledge, as it occupies the life of humans in general. Since the human body is the objectivisation of will, as it appears on this level and in this individual, the will's unfolding through time is •a paraphrase (so to speak) of the body, an elucidation of its meaning in the whole and its parts, and is •another way of displaying the *thing in itself* of which the body is a phenomenon. So instead of saying 'affirmation of will' we can say 'affirmation of the body'. The fundamental theme of all the various acts of will is the satisfaction of the needs that are inseparable from the body's health, . . . and come down to •maintenance of the individual and •propagation of the species. The most diverse motives •other than those two• gain power over the will and bring about the vast range of acts of will. Each of these is only a particular sample of the will that is here manifesting itself generally. The

details of the sample—the particular shape that the motive gives to it—is not essential; what matters here is only that •something or other is willed and •how intensely. Will can become visible only in motives, just as the eye manifests its power of vision only in in the light. Motives confront the will as a many-shaped Proteus¹; they constantly promise utter satisfaction, a quenching of the will's thirst, but as soon as a motive is satisfied it at once appears in another shape and renews its influence on the will. . . .

A human being finds himself—from the start of his consciousness on—engaged in willing; and usually his knowledge remains in a constant relation to his will. He seeks first to become completely familiar with the objects of his willing, then with the means to them. Now he knows what he has to do, and he usually doesn't try to get any other knowledge. He acts and keeps going; consciousness keeps him up and busy, always working toward the goal of his willing; his thinking concerns the choice of means. That's how life goes for almost all humans: they will, know what they will, and use that knowledge to labour with enough success to save them from despair and enough failure to save them from boredom and its consequences. This produces a certain

the next phrase: *Heiterkeit, wenigstens Gelassenheit*

rendered by one previous translator as: serenity, or at least indifference

and by another as cheerfulness, or at least composure,

to which wealth or poverty really make no difference. For the rich and the poor don't enjoy what they *have*, since this (I repeat) is only negatively effective, but rather enjoy what they *hope to get* by their doings. They forge ahead with much seriousness, indeed with an air of importance; children do

¹ [A god in Greek mythology who could change his shape at will.]

the same with their games.

It is always an exception when the course of such a life is interrupted by an aesthetic demand for contemplation or an ethical demand for renunciation, coming from knowledge that is •independent of service to the will and •directed toward the nature of the world in general. Hardship pursues most people throughout life, without giving them a chance for reflection. By contrast, the will is often inflamed to a degree that far exceeds affirmation of the body; and then violent emotions and powerful passions show themselves, in which the individual doesn't merely affirm his own existence but denies and tries to eliminate the existence of others where it stands in his way.

Maintenance of the body by its own forces is such a low level of affirmation of will that if it were voluntarily left at that level we might assume that with the death of this body the will appearing in it is also extinguished. But even satisfaction of the sex drive goes beyond affirmation of one's own so-brief existence, affirming life for an indefinite time beyond the death of the individual. Nature—always true and consistent, and here downright innocent—quite openly exhibits to us the inner significance of the act of procreation. One's own consciousness of the intensity of this drive teaches us that this act expresses the most decisive *affirmation of the will for life*, pure and without any further addition (such as a denial of other individuals). And then—within time and the causal series, i.e. within nature—a new life appears as a consequence of the act; the begotten appears to the begetter, distinct from him in the phenomenon but identical with him *in himself* or with respect to the idea. . . . As thing in itself, the will of the begetter and that of the begotten are not distinct; for only the phenomenon, not the thing in itself, is subject to the individuation-maker. This affirmation ·of the will for life· extends beyond one's own body and out to

the production of a new one; and with the new one suffering and death—as belonging to the phenomenon of life—have also been asserted anew; and the possibility of redemption through the most perfect capacity for knowledge is for the time being declared fruitless. Here lies the deep ground for shame over the business of procreation.

This view is presented mythically in the dogma of Christian doctrine, according to which we all partake of Adam's original sin (which is obviously only the satisfaction of sexual desire), and are obliged to pay for this with suffering and death. That doctrine goes beyond considering things in accordance with the GP, and recognises the idea of humanity, whose unity—from its fall into countless individuals—is reconstituted through the all-embracing bond of procreation. In consequence of this, **(i)** the doctrine views every individual as identical with Adam, representative of the affirmation of life, and to that extent as having fallen subject to sin (original sin), suffering, and death; but also **(ii)** its recognition of the *idea* shows it that every individual is also identical with the Redeemer—representing the denial of the will for life—and to that extent •participates in his self-sacrifice, •is redeemed by his merit, and •is rescued from the bonds of sin and death, i.e. of the world (*Romans* 5, 12–21).

[AS cites 'the Greek myth of Proserpine' as going along with his view about sexual satisfaction, and quotes Goethe on this. He also quotes Clement of Alexandria: 'Those who have castrated themselves away from all sin, on account of the kingdom of heaven, are blessed and are cleansed of the world.' He continues:] That the sex drive is the decisive, strongest affirmation of life is confirmed by the fact that for man in the state of nature—as for animals—it is the ultimate goal, the highest aim of his life. His first endeavour is self-maintenance; and as soon as he has provided for that, he strives only for propagation of the species; that's

all he can work for, as a merely natural being. Nature itself, whose inner being is the will for life itself, drives human beings with all its force to propagate, as it does animals. When that is done, nature has achieved its purpose with the individual and is quite indifferent to its destruction because it—as the will for life—is concerned only with maintenance of the species, so the individual is nothing to it.

[AS reports, with quotations in Greek and Latin from Hesiod, Parmenides and Aristotle, that ancient poets and philosophers said that ‘Eros is the driver of all things’; and something similar in Hindu philosophy.]

The genitals—much more than any other external body-part—are subject merely to will and not at all to knowledge. Indeed, will shows itself here to be almost as independent of knowledge as it is in the parts that serve vegetative life, reproduction, in response to mere stimuli, where will works blindly as it does in unconscious nature. For procreation is only reproduction that goes on into a new individual, reproduction raised to the second power as it were, just as death is only excretion raised to the second power.

So the genitals are the real focus of the will, and consequently the opposite pole from the brain, which is the representative of knowledge, i.e. of the other side of the world, the world as presentation. They ·(the genitals)· are the life-maintaining principle, assuring endless life throughout time, for which they were honoured among the Greeks in the *phallus*, among the Hindus in the *lingam*, which are thus the symbol of the affirmation of will. Whereas knowledge makes possible •suspension of willing, •salvation through freedom, •the conquest and annihilation of the world.

In chapter 54, near the beginning of this fourth Book, I considered in detail how the will for life must in its affirmation view its relation to death, namely that death doesn’t disturb it because it confronts death as contained within

life and belonging to it; while death’s opposite, procreation, completely counter-balances it and—despite the death of the individual—guarantees that the will for life will live throughout all time. . . . I also explained in the same place how fearlessly death is confronted by someone who with full consciousness adopts the standpoint of the decisive affirmation of life. So no more about that here. Most people occupy this standpoint—persistently affirming life—*without* full consciousness. The world exists as the mirror of this assertion, with countless individuals in endless time and endless space, and in endless suffering, between generation and death without end.

In this matter, however, no further complaint can be raised from any side; for will is performing the great tragedy at its own expense, and as its own spectator. The world is exactly what it is because will—whose phenomenon it is—is what it is, because it so wills. The justification for sufferings is the fact that even in this phenomenon will is affirming itself; and this affirmation is justified and balanced out by the fact that will itself bears the sufferings. We get here a glimpse of *eternal justice* with respect to the whole. I’ll take this up more clearly and in detail further on. First, though, I must speak of *temporal or human justice*.

61. The egoism inherent in every being

We recall from Book II [chapter 27] that in the whole of nature, on all levels of the objectification of the will, there was necessarily a constant conflict among the individuals of all species, which expressed an inner *self*-conflict of the will to live. This phenomenon (like all others) can be depicted more clearly, and therefore further deciphered, at the highest level of objectification. To this end I want first to trace *egoism* to its source, as the starting-point for any conflict.

I have called time and space the *individuation-maker* because only through them and within them can there be a multiplicity of things of a single kind. They are the essential forms of natural knowledge, i.e. knowledge arising from the will. So the will always manifests itself in the multiplicity of individuals. But this multiplicity does not concern the will as *thing in itself* but only its phenomena; the will is present whole and undivided in each of them, and sees around itself the innumerable repeated image of its own nature. But it immediately finds this nature—and thus what is actually real—only within itself. Therefore, everyone wants everything for himself, wants to possess or at least control everything, and would like to annihilate anything that stands in his way. Something else about beings that have knowledge: the individual is the bearer of the knowing subject, which is the bearer of the world, meaning that the whole of nature outside him—including all other individuals—exist only in presentation to him. He is conscious of them only as presentation to him, thus merely indirectly and as something dependent on his own nature and existence. . . .

So every knowing individual really is (and finds himself to be) **(i)** the entire will for life, or the very *in-itself* of the world, and also **(ii)** the complementary condition of the world as presentation, and consequently a microcosm whose value is equal to that of the macrocosm. Always and everywhere truthful, nature gives him this knowledge—originally and independently of all reflection—with simple and direct certainty. The two necessary features I have cited enable us to explain why every individual—utterly vanishing and shrunk to nothing in the boundless world—

- makes himself the centre of the world,
- puts his own existence and well-being before anything else,

- from the natural standpoint is ready to sacrifice everything else to it, and
- is ready to annihilate the world, just to maintain his own self, this drop in the ocean, a little longer.

This disposition is the *egoism* that is essential to everything in nature. But the will's inner self-conflict gets its most frightening revelation from this. For this egoism has its existence and its continuance in the contrast between microcosm and macrocosm—in the fact that the objectivation of the will has the individuation-maker as its form, so that the will manifests itself in the same way in countless individuals, and indeed in each of them wholly and completely as will and as presentation. Thus while everyone is immediately given to himself as the whole will and the whole presenter, everything else is initially given only as presentations; so his own being and its maintenance take precedence over the totality of everything else. Everyone looks on his own death as if it were the end of the world, whereas he takes the death of an acquaintance as a matter of comparative indifference unless he has some personal stake in it. In the consciousness that has reached the highest level, that of mankind, egoism is bound to have reached the highest level (as do knowledge, pain, and pleasure), and the conflict of individuals arising from it appears in its most horrible form. We see this everywhere, in matters small and great; we see •now its terrible side in the lives of great tyrants and evil-doers and in wars that ravage the world, and •now the humorous side, where it is the theme of comedy and especially appears as conceit and vanity. . . .

We see it in world history and in our own experience. But it shows up most distinctly as soon as any mob is released from all law and order: *then* there appears most distinctly the *bellum omnium contra omnes* [Latin for 'war of all against all'] that Hobbes has excellently depicted in the first chapter of

his *De Cive*. It shows up not only in

- everyone's trying to snatch from others what he wants for himself, but also in
- someone's destroying another person's entire happiness (or his *life*) for the sake of an insignificant increase in his own well-being.

This is the height of the expression of egoism, the phenomena of which are surpassed only by those of true *malice*, in which someone seeks the harm and pain of others without any advantage to himself; I will address this soon. —This exposition of the source of egoism should be compared with the account of it in section 14 of my Prize Essay on the *Foundation of Morality*. A main source of suffering, which we found above to be essential and unavoidable in all life as soon as it actually occurs in some particular form, is that *Eris*,¹ that battle among all individuals, that expression of the contradiction that the will for life is infected with in its inner being and achieves visibility through the individuation-maker. The staging of animal fights is the cruel way to give it immediate and glaring illustration. In this state of original division there lies an indomitable source of suffering, despite the provisions that have been undertaken against it; and a closer consideration of those will be our next task.

62. Wrong and right

I have already explained that the primary and simple affirmation of the will for life is only affirmation of one's own body, i.e. the display of the will through acts in **time**, to the extent that the body's form and purposiveness displays that same will **spatially** and in no other way. This affirmation shows itself as maintenance of the body through its own forces.

Satisfaction of the sex drive is directly linked to this, is indeed *part* of it because the genitals are part of the body. Therefore, renunciation of that drive's satisfaction, *voluntarily* and without grounding in any motive, is a denial of the will for life, the will's voluntary self-suppression in response to knowledge that acts as a *quieter*. Accordingly, such a denial of one's own body exhibits itself as a contradiction between the will and its own phenomenon. For although the body objectifies in the genitals the will to perpetuate the species, yet this ·perpetuation· is not willed. Such a renunciation, being a denial or suppression of the will to live, is a hard and painful self-conquest; but more about this later.

Because of the egoism that is characteristic of everyone, it is easy for the will's self-affirmation in a one individual's body to pass on to a denial of that same will as it makes its appearance in b another individual—destroying or injuring b's body or compelling the forces of b's body to serve a's will instead of b's.

This incursion into the boundaries of someone else's affirmation of will has long been clearly recognised and its concept designated by the word *wrong*. For both parties recognise what's going on, not in a clear and abstract way as I am doing here but as a feeling, instantly. The wronged one feels

the encroachment on the sphere of his own body's affirmation through its denial by someone else
as an immediate mental pain that is quite different from any physical suffering caused by the deed, or any vexation over whatever loss it causes. The one who commits the wrong, on the other hand, is made aware of the fact that

he is in himself the same will that appears in that ·other· body also, asserting itself with such vehemence

¹ [the Greek goddess of strife and discord]

that it extends to the denial of this very same will in someone else, and so—considered as *will in itself*—it is in conflict with itself and is lacerating itself;

and his awareness of this comes not *in abstracto* but immediately as an obscure feeling; and this is what is called the sting of conscience or, more relevant to this case, the feeling of having done wrong.

Wrong, the concept of which I have been analysing in abstract terms, gets its most complete, basic, and blatant exemplification in **(i)** cannibalism. This is the clearest and most evident kind of wrongness, the horrific image of the greatest self-conflict of will at the highest level of its objectification, the human being. Next to it comes **(ii)** murder, the commission of which is immediately followed with frightful clarity by the sting of conscience, the abstract and dry significance of which I have just given, and inflicts on the murderer's peace of mind a wound that a lifetime cannot heal. For our shudder over a murder that has been committed, as well as our shrinking from committing one, corresponds to the boundless attachment to life that every living thing—as a phenomenon of the will for life—is pervaded with. (Later on I'll analyse more thoroughly the feeling that accompanies the commission of wrong and evil—i.e. pangs of conscience—clarifying the concept of it.) To be viewed as differing from murder only in degree is intentional **(iii)** mutilation, or mere injury to another's body, indeed any blow. Wrongness is also displayed in **(iv)** the subjection of other individuals, in forcing them into slavery, and in **(v)** attacks on the property of others, which, because property is regarded as the fruit of their labour, is essentially the same in kind as slavery, relating to it as mere injury relates to murder.

For property, which cannot be taken from a person without wrong, can—according to my explanation of *wrong*—only be that which has been worked on by his powers; so that by taking it we really take the powers of his body from the will objectified in it, to make them subject to the will objectified in another body. . . . From this it follows that all genuine (i.e. moral) right¹ to property is simply and solely based on labour, as was quite generally assumed even before Kant, and as was clearly and beautifully stated in the oldest of all books of law [in Hindu mythology]: 'Wise men who know the past explain that a cultivated field is the property of him who cut, cleared and ploughed it and got rid of the trees, as an antelope belongs to the first hunter who mortally wounds it.'

Kant's whole doctrine of right is a strange interweaving of errors all leading to one another, and he grounds the *right to property on first occupancy*. I can only think of this as a product of Kant's senility. For how should the mere declaration of my will to exclude others from the use of something immediately give me a *right* to it? . . . And how is someone supposed to be acting in a way that is in itself (i.e. morally) wrong if he doesn't respect claims to exclusive possession of a thing that are based on nothing but a mere declaration? How should his conscience trouble him about this? For it is easy to see that there can't be any such thing as getting a right to something by seizing it; a right to something can only come through expending one's own powers on it. When the labour of a someone has cultivated, improved, kept from harm or preserved something—

however small this labour was; even if it was only plucking or picking up from the ground fruit that has grown wild

¹ [At a number of points in this chapter it will be useful to remember that 'right' translates *Recht*, which is also the German word for 'law'. Identifying them is left as an exercise for you.]

- b** anyone who forcibly seizes the thing obviously
- deprives **a** the other of the result of his labour on it,
 - makes **a**'s body serve **b**'s will instead of **a**'s,
 - asserts his will beyond its phenomenon to the point of denying **a**'s; that is
 - does wrong.

By contrast, mere enjoyment of a thing, without working on it or securing it from destruction, creates no more *right* to it than does the declaration that one wants to have exclusive possession of it. A family that has for a century hunted alone in some district without doing anything to improve it would be acting in a morally wrong way if they kept out a newcomer who wanted to hunt there. The so-called 'right of previous occupancy'—according to which an exclusive right to further enjoyment of something is granted as a kind of reward for having previously enjoyed it!—has absolutely no moral basis. To someone invoking this right, a newcomer could with far better right reply: 'Just because you have enjoyed it for so long, it is now right that others should enjoy it.' As for anything that is absolutely incapable of being worked on by improving it or protecting it, there is no morally grounded exclusive possession, except where it is voluntarily surrendered by everyone else, perhaps as payment for other services. But that presupposes a commonwealth regulated by convention, the state.

The morally grounded right to property, as I have derived it above, by its very nature provides the possessor with power over a thing that is just as unlimited as the power he has over his own body; from which it follows that he can—through exchange or gift—transfer his property to others, who then possess the thing with the same moral right that he did.

Regarding the commission of wrong in general: this

occurs either by *violence* or by *cunning*, which are morally on a par.

First, in the case of murder it makes no moral difference whether I use a dagger or poison; and analogously for all bodily injury. The remaining cases of wrong all come down to the fact that in committing a wrong I compel the other individual to serve my will instead of his, to act according to my will instead of his.¹

On the path of violence I achieve this through physical causality, but on the path of cunning I do it by means of motivation, i.e. causality through knowledge, by foisting pseudo-motives on the other person's will, so that he thinks he is following his will but is really following mine. Since the medium for motives is knowledge, I can do that only by bringing falsity into his knowledge, and this is a lie. Its purpose is always to affect the other person's will, and to affect his knowledge only so far as it determines his will. . . .

This applies not only to lies that originate from obvious self-interest, but also to those that come from pure malice, which revels in the painful consequences of the errors it causes in others. Indeed, even mere empty boasting aims at greater or easier influence on the willing and conduct of others through their admiration for the boaster or respect for his opinions. Mere refusal to tell a truth, i.e. to make any statement at all, is not wrong in itself, but every imposing of a lie is surely wrong. . . . Every lie, just like every act of violence, is as such a wrong. For its purpose is to extend the rule of my will to other individuals, thus affirming my will by denying theirs, just as much as violence does.

The most complete lie is the broken contract, since here all the conditions I have mentioned are completely and clearly

¹ [This passage is indented because it seems to be a sheer interruption.]

united. For when I enter into a contract, the promised performance of the other individual is immediately and admittedly the motive for my reciprocal performance. The promises are exchanged with care and formality. . . . If the other party breaks the contract, he has deceived me and, by getting me to accept *psuedo*-motives of his as genuine, has bent my will to fit his intention, extending the rule of his will over another individual and thus committing a complete wrong. This is the moral basis for the legitimacy and validity of contracts.

Wrong by violence is not as discreditable for the perpetrator as wrong by cunning: because

(i) violence involves physical force, which is respected by the human species under any circumstances, whereas cunning's circuitous route involves weakness, and thus lowers him—the perpetrator—both as a physical and as a moral being;

and because

(ii) lies and deceit can succeed only through the perpetrator's winning the trust of his victim by expressing abhorrence and contempt for them, so that his victory rests on his being credited with an honesty that he doesn't have.

Why do deceit, disloyalty, and betrayal always arouse deep abhorrence? Because loyalty and honesty are the bond that externally reunifies the will that has been splintered into a plurality of individuals, thus setting limits to the consequences of the egoism that comes from this splintering. Disloyalty and betrayal shred this final, external bond, leaving boundless room for play to the consequences of egoism.

. . . I have located the content of the concept of *wrong* in the quality of an individual's conduct by which he extends his affirmation of the will appearing in his body so far that it becomes a denial of the will appearing in someone else's. I have

also, through general examples, established the boundary where the domain of wrong begins, and through a few main concepts determined its gradations from the highest on downwards. According to this, the concept of wrong [*Unrecht*] is the original and positive concept; the opposing concept of right [*Recht*] is the derivative and negative one. For we must keep not to the words which would lead us to count 'wrong'—*un-recht*—as derivative, but to the concepts. There would never be talk about right if there were no wrong. The concept of *right* merely contains the negation of *wrong*: an action is right if it is *not* an overstepping of the boundary I have depicted, i.e. not a denial of someone else's will so as to strengthen the affirmation of one's own. That boundary therefore divides. . . .the entire domain of possible actions into those that are wrong and those that are right. So long as an action does not (in the manner discussed above) reach into and deny the sphere of someone else's affirmation of will, it is not wrong. Thus, for example, refusing help to someone in dire need, calmly observing someone starving to death while one has a surplus, is cruel and fiendish to be sure, but not *wrong*. But there's no room for doubt that someone who is capable of pushing uncharitableness and hardness that far will also commit *any* wrong as soon as his desires demand it and nothing blocks it.

The concept of right as the negation of wrong has found its main application, and no doubt also its origin, in cases where an attempted wrong is warded off with violence; such a defence cannot also be wrong, so it is right. The violence it involves, regarded merely in itself and taken out of context, would be wrong; in this case it is justified—i.e. is made right—only by the motive for it. If an individual goes so far in affirming his own will that he intrudes on the sphere of affirmation of the will essential to my person as such, and thereby denies it, my defence against that intrusion is only

the denial of that denial, and to that extent nothing more on my part than affirmation of the will making its appearance essentially and originally in my body, and. . .consequently is not wrong, hence right. This means that I have a right to deny the other individual's denial with the force necessary to eliminate it, which it's easy to see can go as far as *killing* the other individual, whose encroachment on my space is an intruding external power, and can without any wrong—and consequently with right—be warded off by somewhat stronger countermeasures. For everything that happens from my side is wholly within the sphere of affirmation of the will essential to my person as such and already expressed by my person (which is the scene of the battle); none of it intrudes into the other's sphere—it is only my negation of his negation, and is thus not itself negation. I can thus without wrong compel the other's will (which is denying my will as it makes its appearance in my body). . . .to desist from that denial; i.e. I have to this extent a right of compulsion.

In any situation where I have a right of compulsion—a complete right to use violence against others—I can equally well oppose the violence of others with cunning; and therefore I have an actual *right to lie precisely to the extent that I have a right of compulsion*. So someone is acting completely in the right if he assures the highwayman who is searching him that he is carrying nothing more; similarly for someone who lures the night-time burglar into the cellar by a lie and then locks him in. Someone who is carried off as a captive by brigands, e.g. by Barbary pirates, has the right to kill them for the sake of his liberation, not only with overt violence but also by devious means.

For this reason too, a promise compelled by direct physi-

cal violence is in no way binding, because anyone suffering such compulsion can, with complete right, free himself by *killing* the perpetrator, let alone *deceiving* him! Someone who can't use violence to recover property stolen from him commits no wrong if he gets it back by cunning. And if someone is gambling with money stolen from me, I have the right to use loaded dice against him, since everything I win from him already belongs to me. Anyone who would deny this must all the more deny the legitimacy of stratagem in war, which is in fact a lie by deeds, and is a proof of the saying of Queen Christina of Sweden, 'The words of men should be counted for nothing; their deeds are hardly to be trusted.' I regard it as superfluous to demonstrate that this is all in utter agreement with what I have said regarding the illegitimacy of lies and of violence. It can also serve to clarify some odd theories about the telling of a white lie.¹

According to everything I have said up to here, *wrong* and *right* are merely *moral* determinations, i.e. ones that are applicable to human action considered as such and with reference to the inner significance of this action *in itself*. This inner significance announces itself directly in consciousness through

- (i) the fact that wrongdoing is accompanied by an inner pain that is the perpetrator's merely *felt* consciousness of the excessive strength of the affirmation of will in him, which extends to denying the manifestation of will in someone else; and through
- (ii) the fact that although *as a phenomenon* he is indeed distinct from the one who is being wronged he is *in himself* identical with him.

Further discussion of this inner significance of all pangs of

¹ [*Nothlüge*. Despite the component *Noth* = 'need', which has led previous translators to put 'necessary lie' or 'lie told under pressure', this compound refers to a minor, casual, morally unimportant lie, colloquially called a 'white lie'.]

conscience must be delayed until later [chapter 65]. The one who is suffering the wrong, on the other hand, is •painfully conscious of the denial of his will. . . . and is •aware that he could fend off that denial in any way he can, without doing wrong. This purely moral significance is the only one that right and wrong have for human beings as human beings, not as citizens. So it would remain even in the state of nature, in the absence of any man-made laws, and constitutes the foundation and content of all that is called *natural right*, but would better be called ‘moral right’, because its validity doesn’t extend to the suffering, to the actual external *Realität*, but only to the action and the ensuing self-knowledge that arises in a person with respect to his individual will; this is called *conscience*; but in the state of nature it can’t in every case make claims upon other individuals as well, keeping violence from holding sway instead of right. In the state of nature, it is merely up to everyone not to do wrong in any case, but by no means not to suffer wrong in any case, which depends on the external power that he happens to have. Therefore, the concepts of right and wrong are in no way conventional, but apply in the state of nature merely as moral concepts, bearing on each person’s self-knowledge with respect to his own will. They are a fixed point on the scale of the various degrees of strength with which the will for life affirms itself in human individuals, like the freezing point of water on the thermometer—the point where affirmation of one’s own will becomes the denial of someone else’s. . . . But anyone who wants to •set aside or reject a purely moral consideration of human action and •consider action ·not in terms of inner states, but· merely with respect to external efficacy and its consequences, can join Hobbes in declaring right and wrong to be conventional, chosen determinations,

with no application outside man-made law. And we can never teach such a person by outer experience something that doesn’t belong to outer experience. Just as that same Hobbes—

who remarkably displayed the completely empirical character of his way of thinking, when in his *Principles of Geometry* he rejected the whole of strictly pure mathematics, stubbornly maintaining that a point has extension and a line breadth

—can never be shown an unextended point or a line without breadth, and so can no more be taught the apriority of mathematics than the apriority of right, because he has once and for all shut himself off from all non-empirical knowledge.

The pure doctrine of right is thus a chapter of morality, and is directly related to doing, not to suffering.¹ For only doing is an expression of will, which is all that morality considers. Suffering is a mere event, and morality can be concerned with it only indirectly, in showing that what happens merely to avoid suffering wrong is itself not wrongdoing. The working out of this chapter of ethics would contain the precise setting of •how far an individual may go in asserting the will already objectified in his body without denying the same will as it appears in someone else, and of •what actions overstep these limits and so are wrong and can be warded off without wrong. Always, then, one’s own *doing* remains the focal point for consideration.

A detailed exposition of this branch of morality would contain exact specifications of •how far an individual can go in affirming the will already objectified in his body without denying the same will as it appears in another individual; and also of •the actions that transgress these limits, which consequently are wrong and so may be prevented without

¹ [The generality of the point AS is making here might be expressed by translating *Leiden* not by ‘suffering’ but by ‘undergoing’.]

wrong. Thus our own action always remains the point of view of the investigation.

But the suffering of wrong appears as an event in outward experience, and (to repeat something I said earlier) it is by far the clearest display of the phenomenon of the will-to-live's conflict with itself. Its sources are •the multiplicity of individuals and •egoism, both of which are conditioned through the individuation-maker. . . . We also saw earlier that a very large part of the suffering essential to human life has its perennial source in that conflict of individuals.

But the faculty of *reason* common to all these individuals—which allows them to know not merely about single events (as animals do) but also abstractly about everything as a connected whole—soon •taught them to see the source of that suffering and •brought them to think of the means for diminishing (or possibly eliminating) it through a common sacrifice that would be outweighed by the common advantage arising from it. . . .

Reason—having briefly

- emerged from the one-sided standpoint of the individual whose reason it is,
- freed itself from its attachment to him, and
- surveyed the whole

—•saw the pleasure of wrongdoing in one individual as always outweighed by a greater pain in another's suffering wrong, and •found further that, since all of this is left to chance, everyone would have to fear that he ·in particular· would share in the pleasure of occasional wrongdoing much less often than he would suffer the pain of being wronged. Reason recognised from this that the best and only **means** to lessen the suffering spread among everyone, and to distribute it as uniformly as possible, is to spare everyone the pain of suffering wrong by having everyone renounce the pleasure attainable by wrongdoing.

This **means**—which gradually developed from egoism through the employment of reason—is the *political contract* or *law*. Its origin as I present it here is already depicted by Plato in the *Republic*. That origin is in essence the only one, being imposed by the nature of the subject. No state anywhere can have had a different origin, because this way of starting, this purpose, is what makes something a state in the first place. It makes no difference whether the preceding condition was that of a mass of independent savages (anarchy) or of a mass of slaves ruled by the arbitrary will of the stronger (despotism). Either way, there was still no state; a state arises only through that common agreement, and it is more or less perfect depending on whether that agreement is more or less unmixed with anarchy or despotism. Republics tend toward anarchy, monarchies toward despotism; the middle road of constitutional monarchy—devised to avoid both of those—tends toward domination by factions. To establish a perfect state, one must first create beings whose nature allows them to *thoroughly* sacrifice their own welfare to that of the public. But until that happens, at least something can be achieved through the existence of one family **a** whose welfare is entirely inseparable from **b** that of its land, so that—at least in the main affairs—the welfare of **a** the one can never be promoted without promoting the welfare of **b** the other. That is why hereditary monarchy is strong and advantageous.

Morality is exclusively concerned with *doing-right-or-wrong*, and could precisely draw the line for someone who was resolved to do no wrong; whereas political theory, legislative doctrine, is solely concerned with *suffering wrong*, and would never bother about wrong-doing if it weren't for its inevitable correlate, the suffering of wrong, which is the focus of the state's attention because it is the enemy it is working against. Indeed, a case of wrong-*doing* uncon-

nected with anyone's *suffering* of wrong—if such a thing were conceivable—would not be forbidden by the state.

In addition—another difference between morality and political theory—in morality the object of consideration and the only real thing is the will, one's mental attitude; so a strong intention to act wrongly. . . . counts just the same for morality as a wrong that is actually committed, and its tribunal condemns anyone who has such an intention; whereas the state has no concern with

- will and mental attitude merely as such, but only with
- the *deed* (whether merely attempted or actually carried out),

which it cares about only because of its correlate, the *suffering* of the other party. For the state the only real thing is the deed, the event; the attitude, the intention, is enquired into only as a source of knowledge of the deed's significance. So the state won't forbid thoughts of murdering or poisoning someone, as long as it knows with certainty that fear of the sword and the wheel¹ will constantly prevent such thoughts from being put into effect. The state doesn't have the stupid policy of eradicating all inclinations to wrongdoing, all wicked frames of mind; it merely tries to link—through the inevitable punishment—every possible motive for acting wrongly with an outweighing motive for refraining; so the criminal code is the most complete index of counter-motives to the totality of criminal acts presumed to be possible—both of them *in abstracto*, to facilitate application to eventual cases *in concreto*.

For this purpose political theory will borrow the chapter of morality which is the doctrine of right and which determines, along with the inner meaning of right and wrong, the exact

line between the two; but it does this simply and solely to employ it in reverse. [AS's explanation of this is longer than it needs to be. It is just that behaviours that are wrong are ones we have a right to defend ourselves against, and there are laws about this. He continues:] So the legal theorist is a moralist in reverse, and legal theory in the strict sense—i.e. the doctrine of the *rights* that one may maintain—is morality in reverse. . . .

The concept of wrong and its negation, the concept of right, ·a concept-pair· that is basically *moral*, becomes *juridical* through displacement of the point of departure from the active to the passive side. This has recently occasioned the strange error of supposing that the state is an institution for the promotion of morality, and is accordingly directed against egoism (an error that owes something to the *doctrine of right* of Kant, who wrongly derives from his categorical imperative the establishing of the state as a moral duty). As if the inner disposition to which morality or immorality alone pertain, the eternally free will, could be modified from without and altered by effects upon it! Even more perverse is the theory that **a** the state is the condition of **b** freedom in the moral sense, and thereby of morality;² For freedom lies beyond phenomena, and indeed beyond human arrangements. The state is (I repeat) so little *directed against* egoism as such that it has *originated from* the egoism of all, with this understood in a way that abandons a one-sided for a general standpoint, and so produces a communitarian effect. And the state exists solely to serve that egoism, having been established on the correct assumption that pure morality—i.e. morally grounded rectitude—is not to be expected, for if it were, the state would be superfluous. Thus it is not against

¹ [Two devices for capital punishment, the second of them horribly painful.]

² [It's not clear from the German whether this means that **a** makes **b** possible or that **a** creates **b** .]

egoism, but only against the harmful consequences of egoism that come from the plurality of egoistic individuals and disturb their well-being, that the state is directed, with this well-being as its purpose. Thus Aristotle said: 'The end of the state is the good life, by which is meant a happy and honourable life.' Hobbes has also accurately and excellently expounded this origin and purpose of the state, which is also characterised in the ancient principle of all political order: 'The general welfare has to be the first law' (Cicero).

If **a** the state completely achieves its goal, it will produce the same phenomenon as if **b** complete righteousness of disposition held general sway. But the inner natures and origins of the two phenomena will be opposites of one other. In **b** the latter case the situation would be that nobody wanted to *do* wrong, while in **a** the former nobody would be willing to *suffer* wrong and appropriate means had been adopted to achieve this. Thus a single line can be described as going in opposite directions, and a carnivore with a muzzle is as harmless as a herbivore.

But the state can't bring things beyond this point; it can't display any phenomenon that might have originated in a general condition of mutual benevolence and love. For just as we found that

the state rules out **a** *all wrongdoing*, rather than **b** *all wrongdoing that leads to suffering on the part of someone else* only because it couldn't make the judgments needed to identify breeches of **b** that weren't also breeches of **a**;

so conversely

in accordance with its orientation toward the well-being of all, the state would most gladly see to it that **c** everyone experiences all sorts of benevolence and works of human love, if it weren't that this inevitably involves **d** the performance of benevolent deeds and

works of love; every citizen of the state would like to play **c** the passive role, and none to play **d** the active role, and there would indeed be no ground for putting **c** ahead of **d**

Accordingly, one can—meaning that the state can—only compel the negative, namely rights, not the positive thing that has been referred to under the labels 'duties of love' or 'imperfect duties'.

As I have said, legislation gets the pure doctrine of right—or of the essence and boundaries of right and wrong—from morality, so as to apply it in reverse to establish the state, i.e. positive legislation and the means for supporting it. Thus, positive legislation is purely moral doctrine of right as applied in reverse. The application may be made with reference to the peculiar relations and circumstances of a particular people. But it is only when positive legislation is thoroughly determined in its essentials under the direction of pure doctrine of right, and for each of its statutes a ground is demonstrable in pure doctrine of right, that the resultant legislation is strictly speaking positive right and the state a lawful union, a state in the strict sense of the term—a morally permissible institution, not an immoral one. Otherwise, positive legislation is the foundation of a positive wrong; is indeed the compelling of a publicly acknowledged wrong. Such is every despotism, the constitution of most Islamic kingdoms, and here belong many parts of a number of constitutions, e.g. indentured servitude, forced labour and the like.

The pure doctrine of right, or natural right—or, better put, moral right—is just as much the basis for all lawful man-made legislation, although always by reversing it, as pure mathematics is of every branch of applied mathematics.

The most important points of the pure doctrine of right,¹ as philosophy has to supply it for that end to legislation, are the following: **(i)** Explanation of the inner and true meaning and origin of the concepts of wrong and right, and their application and place in morality. **(ii)** Derivation of the right to property. **(iii)** Derivation of the moral validity of contracts, this being the moral foundation of the political contract. **(iv)** Explanation of the origin and purpose of the state, of the relation of this purpose to morality, and of this relation's enabling the moral doctrine of right to be extended, in reverse, for the purpose of legislation. **(v)** Derivation of the right to punish.

The remaining content of the doctrine of right is mere application of these principles, more precise definitions of the boundaries between right and wrong for all possible circumstances of life, which are for this purpose classified according to certain points of view and headings. With respect to these details, textbooks of pure right are mainly in agreement; but they *sound* very different in their principles, because they are always connected with some philosophical system. Having explained **(i)-(iv)** in terms of my own system, briefly and generally but precisely and clearly, it remains only for me to address in the same way **(v)** the right to punish.

Kant makes the fundamentally false assertion that outside the state there would be no complete **right to property**. According to my arguments, there is also property in the state of nature, with a perfectly natural—i.e. moral—right that can't be violated without wrong, but can be defended to the utmost without wrong. On the other hand, there is certainly no **right to punish** outside the state. All right to punish is based solely on man-made law, which settles—before the

offence—a punishment the threat of which is meant to act as as a counter-motive to outweigh any motives for the offence. This law is to be viewed as sanctioned and acknowledged by all citizens of the state. It is thus grounded in a collective contract which the members of the state are committed to conform to under all circumstances, both in the inflicting of punishment and in enduring it; and so the enduring of punishment is enforceable by law. It follows that the immediate purpose of punishment in the individual case is *fulfillment of the law as a contract*. But the single purpose of the law is *deterrence* from encroaching on the rights of others. . . .

Thus the law and the carrying out of it, punishment, are essentially directed to the future, not to the past. This distinguishes *punishment* from *revenge*, the latter being motivated only by what has been done, and thus by the past as such. All retribution for wrong through the infliction of a pain without any purpose for the future is revenge, and can have no purpose except to console oneself, through the sight of another's suffering caused by oneself, for the suffering one has undergone. This sort of thing is malice and cruelty, and morally unjustifiable. Someone's inflicting wrong on me in no way entitles me to inflict wrong on him. Repaying evil with evil without further intention is not justifiable morally or in any other rational way, and to adopt the *lex talionis* as the ultimate principle of penal law is senseless.² Therefore, Kant's doctrine of punishment as mere retribution for the sake of retribution is utterly groundless and perverse. Yet it continues to haunt the writings of many legal theorists, under all sorts of elegant phrases that amount to empty word-mongering—such as that through punishment the

¹ [Just this once, a reminder that 'right' translates *Recht*, which can mean 'law'.]

² [Latin for 'law of retaliation', often summed up in the phrase 'An eye for an eye'.]

crime is ‘atoned for’ or ‘neutralised and nullified’, and the like. No-one is entitled to set himself up arrogantly as a purely moral judge and revenge-taker, punishing another’s misdeeds by inflicting pain on him. . . .

As the Bible says: ‘Revenge is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay.’ But a person surely has the right to be concerned for the security of society, which can only be done by prohibiting all acts designated as ‘criminal’, so as to avert them by way of counter-motives, which is what the threat of punishment is; and the threat is effective only if it is carried out in cases that occur despite it. . . .

Now here a Kantian would inevitably object that on this view the punished criminal would be used ‘merely as a means’. This proposition so tirelessly repeated by all Kantians—that ‘one should treat a person always only as an end, never as a means’—has a significant ring to it, to be sure, making it suitable for all those who are glad to have a formula that spares them all further thought. But looked at in the light, it is an extremely vague, indefinite assertion which reaches its aim quite indirectly, requires to be explained, defined, and modified in every particular case of its application, and if taken generally is insufficient, meagre, and moreover problematical. The murderer who is subject to the death penalty in accordance with the law must indeed, and with full right, now be used as a mere *means*. For public security, the main purpose of the state, is disrupted (indeed nullified) by him if the law is not carried out. The murderer—his life, his person—must now be the *means* to fulfilling the law and thereby restoring public security; and it is made such, with every right, in the interest of carrying out the political contract; a contract which even he had entered into in his role as a citizen. According to it,

he had—to enjoy security for his life, his freedom, and his property—posted his life, his freedom, and his property as a bond for the security of all; and that bond is now forfeit.

The doctrine of punishment that I present here is in the main not a new thought, but only one that has been nearly suppressed by new errors, creating a need for a very clear exposition of it. The same doctrine is in its essentials already contained in what Pufendorf says about this in his *De officio hominis et civis*. Hobbes is likewise in agreement (*Leviathan*, chapters 15 and 28). In our time, Feuerbach is well known for defending it. Indeed, it is already found in the pronouncements of the philosophers of antiquity: Plato sets it forth clearly in *Protagoras*, *Gorgias* and *The Laws*. Seneca gives perfect voice to Plato’s opinion and to the whole doctrine of punishment in these brief words: ‘No wise man punishes because wrong has been done, but in order that wrong not be done.’

We have thus come to recognise in the state the means by which egoism endowed with reason seeks to evade its own negative consequences, and everyone now promotes the welfare of all because he sees his own involved in it. If the state achieved its goal *completely*, and was able to employ the human forces thus united in it to make the rest of nature more and more subservient to it, there might eventually come to pass—doing away with all sorts of ills—something like the Promised Land. But there are five things spoiling this happy thought. (i) The state has never come anywhere close to this goal. (ii) Countless ills essential to life would at once take the place vacated by the others, and keep life in its suffering as before; and if all those were done away with, boredom would set in. (iii) Strife among individuals can never be entirely eliminated by the state, because when strife is prohibited in

¹ [The goddess of discord in ancient Greek mythology.]

large matters, it still vexes us in small ones—that the state can't be concerned with. (iv) With Eris¹ happily driven out of our midst, she eventually switches: banned by political institutions as a conflict among individuals, she comes back as war among peoples, and now demands in bulk and at once, as an accumulated debt, the bloody sacrifice that wise precautions have denied to her on the small scale. (v) If all these difficulties were finally overcome and disposed of—by skill acquired through the experience of millennia—the result would eventually be **overpopulation of the entire planet**, a horrific ill that only a bold imagination can now envisage.

63. Temporal justice versus eternal justice

We have learned to recognise temporal justice, which has its seat in the state, as retributive or punitive; and we've seen that it becomes *justice* only through its concern for the future; for without that all punishment and retribution would be an iniquity without justification—taking an evil that had already occurred and, without sense or significance, adding a second evil to it. The situation is entirely different with eternal justice, which I mentioned earlier and which governs not the state but the world, does not depend on human institutions, is not subject to chance and deception, is not uncertain, vacillating and erring, but infallible, firm and sure.

The concept of retribution of course includes *time*; so eternal justice cannot be retributive—cannot

- allow of delays and deadlines,
- need time in which to balance bad deeds with bad consequences, or therefore
- need time in order to subsist.

With eternal justice, the punishment has to be so bound up with the offence that the two are one.

Do you think that crimes fly to the gods on wings,
And that someone writes them on Jove's tablet,
And Jove seeing them passes judgment on men?
The whole of Heaven would not be large enough
To take in all men's sins if Jove wrote them down.
No! Punishment is here, if only you would see it.
(Euripedes)

That such an eternal justice actually lies in the nature of the world will soon become completely evident to anyone who has grasped it on the basis of my thought up to here.

The phenomenon, the objectivisation of the one will for life, is *the world* in all the plurality of its parts and forms. Existence itself and any mode of existence—in the whole as in every part—emerges only from will. It is free, it is omnipotent. In each thing the will appears exactly as it determines itself to do, in itself and outside time. The world is only the mirror of this willing. And all the finitude, all the suffering, all the torments the world contains, belonging to the expression of what the will wills, are as they are because it wills as it does. Accordingly with perfect right every being supports existence in general, and then the existence of its species and of its own peculiar [see Glossary] individuality, entirely as it is and in circumstances exactly as they are, in a world such as this one is,

- ruled by chance and by error,
- temporal,
- transitory, and
- constantly suffering.

Justice is always done to it in everything that does—indeed, everything that *can*—happen to it. For the will belongs to it, and as the will is, so is the world. The responsibility for this world's existence and character lies with this world itself, not with any other; for how could it have *acquired* them from

anything else?

If we want to know what human beings, morally considered, are worth on the whole and in general, we have only to consider their fate on the whole and in general. It is lack, misery, sorrow, torment, and death. Eternal justice prevails: if they weren't so worthless, taken on the whole, then their fate (taken on the whole) would not be so sad. In this sense we can say: the world itself is the world court of justice. If all the world's sorrow were placed in one pan of a scale, and all the world's guilt in the other, the needle would certainly point to the centre.

Of course the world is not displayed to the knowledge of the individual as such in the way it is finally revealed to the inquirer, as the objectivisation of that one and only will for life that he himself is. Rather, as the Indians say, the veil of Maya¹ obscures the view of the uncultivated individual. Instead of the thing in itself, he is shown only the phenomenon, within time and space, the individuation-maker,² and within the other modes of the GP; and in this knowledge he doesn't see •the nature of things, which is unitary, but rather •its phenomena, as separate things, distinct, innumerable, very unlike one another, indeed opposed to one another. Here pleasure appears to him as one thing and torment as an entirely different one, this person as a torturer and murderer and that as a martyr and victim, wickedness as one thing and misfortune as another. He sees one person living in happiness, surplus, and pleasures, while another is dying at his door of cold and starvation. Then he asks: where is the retribution ·for these evil acts·? And he himself, in the

intense press of the will that is his origin and his nature, seizes the pleasures and enjoyments of life, grasps them in a tight embrace, and doesn't know that by this very act of his will he is seizing and pressing to himself all the pains and torments of life that he shudders at the sight of. He sees the misfortunes, he sees the evil in the world, but—far as he is from realising that these are only different sides of the phenomenon of a single will for life—he takes them to be very different, indeed wholly opposed to one another, and often tries to escape the misfortunes, the suffering, of his own individual case through wickedness, i.e. by causing another's suffering—caught up in the individuation-maker, deceived by the veil of Maya.

Like a seaman who sits in his boat, trusting this frail craft in a raging sea that lifts and lowers mountains of water, so the human individual sits peacefully in a world full of torments, supported by and trusting in the individuation-maker, i.e. the way the individual knows things as phenomena. The unbounded world—full of suffering everywhere, in the infinite past and infinite future—is foreign to him; indeed it is a fable to him. His vanishing person, his unextended present, his momentary satisfaction, this alone has reality for him; and he does everything to maintain it, so long as his eyes are not opened by knowledge of something better. Until that happens, there dwells in the innermost depths of his consciousness only the obscure threatening sense³ that all this is really not so foreign to him, but has a connection with him that the individuation-maker can't protect him from. This creates the *dread* that suddenly grips one—so

¹ [See the last paragraph of chapter 4 for AS's first mention of this.]

² [See the final paragraph of chapter 3 for AS's introduction of this phrase.]

³ [This two-word phrase translates *Ahndung*, which literally means 'punishment'.]

ineradicable and common to all human beings; . . .—when by some chance occurrence they become disoriented with respect to the individuation-maker, when there seems to be an exception to the GP in one of its modes—for example, when it seems that something happened without a cause, or a dead person appeared, or in some other way the past or the future were present, or distant things were close. Men’s tremendous horror over such things comes from their suddenly becoming disoriented about the forms of knowledge of the phenomenon, which are all that keep their own individual person separate from the rest of the world. But this separation lies only in the phenomenon, not in the thing in itself; and eternal justice rests on exactly *that*.

In fact all temporal happiness stands—and all wisdom moves—on ground that is hollowed out beneath. They protect the person from mishaps and provide him with enjoyments. But the person is mere phenomenon, and his difference from other individuals and his freedom from the sufferings they bear depends on the form of the phenomenon, the individuation-maker. According to the true nature of things, everyone should regard all the world’s sufferings as his own, indeed all merely possible sufferings as actual for himself, so long as he is the firm will for life, i.e. affirms life with all his force. For knowledge that looks through the individuation-maker, a happy life in time—granted by chance or won from it through prudence amidst the sufferings of countless others—is only the dream of a beggar in which he is a king, but from which he must awaken to learn that he has been separated from his life’s sorrows only by a fleeting deception.

Eternal justice withdraws itself from the vision that is involved in the knowledge which follows the GP in the individuation-maker; that way of looking at things misses eternal justice altogether unless it vindicates it in some way

by fictions. It sees evil people, after committing outrages and cruelties of every sort, living in pleasure and departing the world untroubled. It sees the oppressed drag a life full of suffering up to the end, without the arrival of an avenger, a requiter. Eternal justice will be comprehended and grasped only by one who

- rises above knowledge that is led by the GP and is bound to individual things,
- recognises the ideas,
- sees through the individuation-maker, and
- becomes aware that the forms of phenomena don’t apply to the thing in itself.

Also, only such a person can (through that same knowledge) understand the true nature of virtue, as it will soon appear in the context of my present considerations—although knowledge *in abstracto* is in no way required for the practice of virtue. To anyone who has attained the knowledge in question it becomes clear that, because will is the *in-itself* of all phenomena, the **a** torment inflicted on others and **b** the torment experienced by oneself—**a** evils and **b** misfortunes—always concern only that one and inner being, even if the phenomena in which **a** the one or **b** the other stand before us as entirely distinct individuals and are even separated by distant times and spaces. He sees that the difference between someone who inflicts suffering and someone who has to endure it is only a phenomenon and doesn’t concern the *thing in itself* that is the will which lives in both of them. This will, being deceived by knowledge bound to its service, fails to recognise itself here; seeking **a** increased well-being in one of its phenomena, it produces **b** great suffering in the other; and so in its intense pressing it buries its teeth in its own flesh, not knowing that it wounds only itself, thus revealing through the medium of individuation the self-conflict that is part of its inner nature. The tormentor

and the tormented are one. The former errs in believing that he does not share in the torment, the latter in believing that he does not share in the guilt. [AS spells this out along the lines already laid down, and then sums up:] The foreboding poet Calderon in his *Life is a Dream* expresses this: ‘The greatest guilt of man is to have been born. How can it *not* be guilt, since by eternal law it is followed by death?’ Calderon has here only expressed the Christian dogma of original sin.

Living knowledge of eternal justice, of the balance-beam that inseparably connects guilt with punishment, demands complete elevation above individuality and the principle of its possibility; so it will be always inaccessible to the majority of human beings (as will also the pure and clear knowledge of the nature of all virtue, shortly to be discussed).

Thus the wise patriarchs of the Indian people in fact pronounced it directly in the Vedas, in their **esoteric wisdom**,

- available only to the three castes of the reincarnated, so far as it is captured by concepts and language and permitted by their ever imagistic, even rhapsodic manner of depiction,

but in the popular religion, or in their **exoteric doctrine**,

- communicated it only mythically, and thus indirectly.

We find the direct depiction in the Vedas, fruit of the highest human knowledge and wisdom, the core of which, in the Upanishads, has finally reached us as the greatest gift of this century, expressed in a variety of ways, but particularly where all the beings of the world, living and lifeless, are led in succession before the gaze of the disciple and over each of them pronounced a word. . . . meaning: ‘This is you.’

But that great truth was translated for the people, so far as they could comprehend it given their limitations, into the form of knowledge that follows the GP, which is indeed from its nature quite incapable of assimilating that truth pure and

in itself, even stands in direct contradiction to it, but received a surrogate for it in the form of myth, which was sufficient as a guide to conduct, making comprehensible through an imagistic depiction the ethical significance of something that is eternally foreign to knowledge according to the GP. This is the purpose of all doctrines of faith, which provide mythical clothing for truths inaccessible to the uncultivated human mind. In this sense, that myth could even be called, in Kant’s language, a ‘postulate of practical reason’. Regarded as such, however, it has the great advantage that it contains absolutely no elements but such as lie before our eyes in the course of actual experience, so that it can support all its concepts with perceptions. What I’m talking about here is the myth of the transmigration of souls. It teaches that all the sufferings anyone inflicts on others during his lifetime have to be made up for in a subsequent life, in this very world, through exactly the same sufferings; this is taken so far that it says that anyone who kills even an animal will, at some point in infinite time, also be born as just such an animal and suffer the same death. It teaches that wicked conduct towards suffering and despised beings leads to a future life *on this earth* in which one is born again

- in lower castes, or
- as a woman, or
- as an animal,
- as a pariah or ‘untouchable’,
- as a leper,
- as a crocodile,

and so on. All the torments the myth threatens it confirms with illustrations from the actual world, by way of suffering beings who don’t know how they have deserved their torment; and it doesn’t need help from any other hell. But as a reward it offers the promise of rebirth in better, nobler forms, as Brahmans, as sages, as saints. The highest reward,

which awaits the noblest needs and the most complete resignation—which will come

- to the woman who has voluntarily died on her husband's funeral pyre seven lifetimes in a row, and
- to the man whose pure mouth has never spoken a single lie

—can be described in the language of this world only negatively, with the oft-repeated promise that they will *never* be reborn at all. . . . Or, as it is expressed by Buddhists, who recognise neither the Vedas nor castes: 'Thou shalt attain Nirvana, i.e. a state in which four things do not exist: birth, old age, sickness, and death.'

There never was and never will be a myth more closely fitted to a philosophical truth that is accessible to so few than this ages-old doctrine of the most noble and ancient people, among whom—although they are now broken up into many parts—it still holds sway as a general popular belief and has a decisive influence on life, today as much as four millennia ago. That *non plus ultra* of mythical depiction was thus already received with admiration by Pythagoras and Plato, taken over from India, or Egypt, honoured, applied, and (we don't know to what extent) even believed.

We, on the other hand, out of compassion for the Brahmans, send out to them English *clergymen* [AS uses the English word, and mockingly emphasises it] and Moravian linen-weavers, to teach them a better way and to teach them that they are made from nothing and should be thankfully pleased about it. But what we get is like what one gets by shooting a bullet at a rock. In India our religions never, *ever* take root; the primordial wisdom of the human race will not be pushed aside by the events in Galilee. On the contrary, Indian wisdom streams back to Europe and will bring about a fundamental alteration in our knowledge and thought.

64. Eternal justice obscurely felt by everyone

I now turn from •my account (not mythical but philosophical) of eternal justice to •related considerations regarding the ethical significance of action and of conscience, which is merely *felt* knowledge of that significance.

But I want first to call attention here to two peculiarities of human nature that might help to clarify how everyone can be aware, at least as an obscure feeling, of the nature of that eternal justice, and of the unity and identity of will in all its phenomena, on which it rests.

(i) When an evil deed is done, causing a pain to someone, if the perpetrator then suffers precisely b the same measure of pain himself, satisfaction is felt not only by •the sufferer of pain a but also by •the entirely impartial spectator who sees pain a and pain b. (This is quite independent of what I have shown to be the state's purpose in punishment, which is the foundation of penal law.) This ·satisfaction· seems to me to express nothing other than the consciousness of that eternal justice. But it is immediately misunderstood and falsified by the unenlightened mind. That mind, caught up in the individuation-maker, . . . demands from the phenomenon something that pertains only to the thing in itself, and does not see to what extent the injuring and injured parties are in themselves one, and that it is the same being which, failing to recognise itself in its own phenomenon, bears both the pain and the guilt, but wants to see the pain also in the particular individual to whom the guilt belongs.

Thus most people would indeed demand that

a person who is very wicked but who (unlike many wicked people) is far superior to others in his exceptional intellectual powers, which have enabled him to inflict unspeakable sufferings on millions of others (e.g. as a world conqueror),

should someday and somewhere be repaid for all those sufferings with an equal measure of pains for himself. For they don't see how the tormentor and the tormented are in themselves one, and that the same will by which the latter exists and lives is also just that which is making its appearance in the former; and indeed in the latter in a greater measure, because there the consciousness has attained a higher degree of clearness and distinctness and the will has greater vehemence.

But the deeper state of knowledge •that is no longer caught up in the individuation-maker, •that all virtue and generosity come from, and •that no longer fosters that vindictive disposition, is attested by the Christian ethic, which absolutely renounces all repaying of evil with evil and allows eternal justice to hold sway in the domain of the thing in itself, distinct from the phenomenon. ('Revenge is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' *Romans* 12:19.)

(ii) A much more striking but also much rarer trait in human nature—

expressing the desire to draw eternal justice into the domain of experience, i.e. of individuation, while also indicating a felt sense that (as I expressed it a few pages back) the will for life performs the great tragicomedy at its own expense, and the very same will lives in all phenomena

—is the following. We sometimes see a person so profoundly appalled by a great outrage that he has undergone—or perhaps only observed—that he deliberately and irrevocably stakes his own life on taking revenge on the perpetrator. We may see him pursue a mighty oppressor for years on end, finally murder him, and then himself die on the scaffold as he had foreseen—indeed often hadn't even tried to avoid, because his life held value for him only as a means toward that revenge.

Examples of this are found especially among the Spanish. If we look more exactly into the spirit of that desire for retribution, we find that it is very different from common revenge, which aims to mitigate suffering endured by the sight of suffering inflicted; indeed, we find that what it.—the obsessive desire for retribution that is my current topic—aims at deserves to be called 'punishment' rather than 'revenge'. For in it there lies the intention of an effect on the future through example, and in particular without any self-interested purpose •for the individual taking revenge or •for any society. Not the individual, because he dies through it; and not a society because a society creates its own security through laws, and in this case the punishment is carried out by the individual, not by the state, and not in fulfillment of any law, because it involves a deed.—the original outrage—that the state wouldn't or couldn't punish, and of whose punishment it •therefore• disapproves. It seems to me that the indignation that drives such a person so far beyond the bounds of self-love springs from the deepest consciousness that he is himself the entire will for life that makes its appearance in all beings through all times, to which the most distant future belongs just as the present does, and to which it cannot be indifferent. In affirming this will, he is demanding that in the drama which represents its nature no such outrage shall ever appear again; he wants to frighten any future •would-be• perpetrator by the example of a vengeance against which there is no means of defence, because the avenger is not deterred by the fear of death. The will to live, though still asserting itself, no longer depends on the particular phenomenon, the individual, but comprehends the idea of *man*, and wants to keep its manifestation pure from such a fearful and shocking wrong. It is a rare, very significant, and even sublime trait of character through which the individual sacrifices himself by striving to make

himself the arm of eternal justice, the true nature of which he doesn't yet recognise.

65. Good, bad, evil, malice. Conscience as feeling

Through all the discussions of human conduct up to here, I have been preparing the way for the last one, and greatly easing the task of •raising to the level of abstract and philosophical clarity the real ethical significance of conduct, which in daily life we designate with perfect understanding by the words 'good' and 'evil', and •demonstrating it as a component of my main thought.

But I want first to trace back to their real significance the concepts *good* and *evil*,

which the philosophical writers of our day amazingly treat as simple concepts, incapable of any analysis; so that the reader will not remain caught up in the senseless delusion that they contain more than they actually do, and in and for themselves already express all that needs to be said here. I can do this—i.e. look analytically at these concepts—because I am myself as little inclined to try to hide anything behind the word *good* in ethics as I was earlier to seek such a thing behind the words *beautiful* and *true*. If I had had that inclination, I might then

perhaps with an appended '-heit', which is nowadays supposed to have a particular gravity, and thereby help out in many cases¹

have assumed an air of solemnity and given out that in pronouncing three such words I had done more than merely signify three very broad and abstract—and consequently empty—concepts with very different origins and meanings.

Has anyone who has made himself familiar with the writings of our day not come to detest those three words, admirable as they are in the things they originally refer to, having seen a thousand times how those who are least capable of thinking believe that they need only to produce those three words—with mouth wide open and the air of an excited sheep—to have spoken great wisdom?

Explanation of the concept **true** has already been provided in my treatise on the GP. The content of the concept **beautiful** received its real explanation through the whole of my Book III—the first time this has been done. Now I want to trace the meaning of the concept **good**, which can be done with very little effort. This concept is essentially relative; it designates the *suitableness of an object to some particular effort of the will*; so that all the things that go along with the will in any of its expressions—all the things that fulfill its purpose—will be thought through the concept *good*, however unlike they are in other respects. Thus we speak of good food, good roads, good weather, good weapons, a good omen, etc.—in brief, we call 'good' anything that is precisely as we would have it. So something can be good to one person that is exactly the opposite of good to another.

The concept of good divides into two subspecies, namely those of

- a immediately present satisfaction and
- b only indirect, future-looking satisfaction

of the will that is in question; i.e. the **a** pleasant and the **b** useful.

The opposite concept, so long as the discourse concerns non-conscious beings, is expressed by the word *bad*, . . . which thus denotes everything that doesn't agree

¹ [This aside requires you to know that in German *wahr* → *Wahrheit* = 'true' → 'truth', that *schön* → *Schönheit* = 'beautiful' → 'beauty', and that *gut* → *Gutheit* = 'good' → 'goodness'.]

with the will's present strivings. Just like all other beings that can enter into a relation with the will, *people* have also been called 'good'—with the same meaning and always retaining the relativity—if they are favourable to directly willed purposes, supportive of them, congenial to them; which is expressed in such words as 'This person is good *for me*, but not *for you*.' But those for whom it is part of their character not to obstruct the endeavours of another person's will as such, but rather to further them, and who are thus thoroughly helpful, benevolent, friendly, beneficent, have been called *good* people on account of how their conduct relates to the will of others in general; ·note *good*, not the relative *good for...*.

[AS says that in German and (these days) French the opposite concept has a different word for conscious beings (*böse, méchant*) from the one it uses for non-conscious ones; most other languages lack this distinction, and use the same word for people and for non-living things that are 'contrary to the purposes of a particular individual will'. He writes as though what comes immediately after this somehow follows from it; but it clearly doesn't. This passage is indented because it is a sheer interruption.]

... The conduct of a person who is called 'good' should now be examined with reference not to others but to himself, with the particular aim of explaining on the one hand the purely objective esteem it produces in others, on the other hand the peculiar self-contentment that it obviously produces in the person himself, given that his conduct cost him sacrifices. . . .; and likewise, in the opposite case, explaining the inner pain that accompanies an evil disposition, however many outward advantages it brings to the person who harbours it. This gave rise to ethical systems, both

a philosophical and **b** faith-based. Both kinds constantly sought to link happiness with virtue:

a the former attempted this either through **c** the principle of contradiction or even through **d** the GP—thus making happiness either **c** identical with virtue or **d** a consequence of it, either way with sophistical reasoning, while

b the latter did it through the proclamation of worlds other than any that could possibly be known to experience.

In my treatment, on the other hand, the inner nature of virtue will prove to be a striving not after happiness, i.e. well-being and life, but in the flatly opposite direction.

From the above it follows that the good, according to its concept, is *something in relation to something else* [AS gives this in Greek], so every good is essentially relative. For it has its being only in its relation to a desiring will. *Absolute good* is thus a contradiction in terms. It means—as does 'highest good', *summum bonum*—a really final satisfaction of the will after which no new willing would occur, an ultimate motive the attainment of which would provide the will with indestructible satisfaction. According to my treatment up to here in this fourth Book, such a thing is not thinkable. Will can no more be so satisfied that it stops willing than time can end or begin; there is no lasting fulfillment for it, completely and forever satisfying its striving. It is the leaking vessel of the Danaïds: there is no highest good, no absolute good for it, but always only one for the time being. If, however, we wish to give an honorary position (as it were *emeritus*) to an old expression that we have grown used to and don't like to discard, we may—metaphorically and figuratively—call

the complete self-effacement and denial of the will,
the true *absence* of will which alone

•for ever stills and silences the will's struggle,

- gives the contentment that can never again be disturbed,
- redeems the world,

and which I shall soon be considering at the end of my whole investigation

the absolute good, the *summum bonum*, and regard it as the only radical cure of the disease of which all other means are only palliations or anodynes. In this sense the Greek *telos* and also *finis bonorum* correspond to the thing still better. So much for the words 'good' and 'evil', but now to the matter at hand.

If someone is always inclined to do *wrong* as soon as an occasion exists and no external power prevents him, we call him *evil* [*böse*]. According to my explanation of 'wrong', this means that such a person not only affirms the will for life as it appears in his body, but goes so far in this that he denies the will as it appears in other individuals; this is shown by his claiming *their* forces for the service of *his* will and trying to eradicate their existence if they oppose the endeavours of his will. The ultimate source of this is a high level of egoism, the nature of which was discussed in chapter 61 above. Two things are at once evident here: **(i)** in such a person an altogether more intense will for life is expressed, going far beyond affirmation of his own life; **(ii)** his knowledge, entirely given over to **a** the GP and caught up in **b** the individuation-maker, remains firmly attached to **b** the latter's complete distinction between his own person and all others. So he seeks only his own well-being, completely indifferent to that of all others, whose nature is utterly foreign to him, separated by a wide abyss from his own—whom indeed he really views only as masks, with nothing real behind them. These two properties are the fundamental elements of an evil character.

This great intensity of willing, then, is—in itself and for

itself and immediately—a constant source of suffering, ·for two reasons·. **(i)** All willing as such originates from lack, thus from suffering. (That is why, as will be recalled from Book III [chapter 38], the momentary silencing of all willing that occurs whenever. . . we are given over to aesthetic contemplation, is indeed a major component of pleasure in the beautiful.) **(ii)** Through the causal interconnection of things, most desires must remain unfulfilled, and the will is frustrated much more often than it is satisfied; and so intense and manifold willing always entails intense and manifold suffering. For all suffering is nothing but unfulfilled and frustrated willing; and even the pain that is felt when the body is injured or destroyed is possible only because the body is nothing but the will itself become object.

For this reason, then, because manifold and intense suffering is inseparable from manifold and intense willing, the facial expression of very wicked people bears the stamp of inner suffering; even when they have attained every external happiness, they always look unhappy except when they are seized by some momentary joy or are dissimulating. This inner torment. . . gives rise to a delight in the suffering of others, which doesn't come from mere egoism but is disinterested; this is true *malice* and rises to the level of *cruelty*. In this, the suffering of others is a goal in itself, not a mere means to the attainment of other goals of one's own will. Here now is a more detailed explanation of this phenomenon.

Because man is a phenomenon of will illuminated by the clearest knowledge, he is constantly comparing the •actual felt satisfaction of his will with the merely •possible satisfaction that his knowledge presents to him. From this comes envy: every privation is made infinitely worse if others are enjoying themselves, and lessened if it is known that others are also enduring the same privation. Ills that are

common to all and inseparable from human life don't trouble us much; nor do those that pertain to the climate or to the whole land ·that one lives in·. Recollection of greater sufferings than our own ·present ones· stills the latter's pain; sight of the sufferings of others alleviates one's own. But someone who is filled with an exceedingly intense press of the will must have a burning greed to take in everything so as to cool the thirst of his egoism, and in so doing is sure to learn

that all satisfaction is only illusory, that attainment never achieves what desire promised, namely, a final stilling of the fierce press of will, because when desire is fulfilled it merely changes and now torments in a different form; and finally when the desires are exhausted the very press of will remains without any conscious motive and announces itself with unassuageable torment as a feeling of the most horrific desolation and emptiness.

... Such a person, finding himself to be subject to an inordinate inner torment, eternal unrest, unsalvable pain, seeks *indirectly* the alleviation of which he is not *directly* capable, that is, he seeks to mitigate his own pain through sight of the suffering of others that he recognises as an expression of his own power. The suffering of others now becomes a goal in itself for him—it's a sight in which he revels, this being the phenomenon of will at its point of exceptional malice. Thence arises the phenomenon of real cruelty, of blood-thirstiness, which history so often shows us in its Neros and Domitians, in its African Deys, in Robespierre, etc.

Vengefulness does indeed have an affinity with malice, ·because each involves· repaying evil with evil not with a view

to the future (which is what characterises punishment) but merely on account of what is done and past as such, thus without self-interest, not as a means but as an end, so as to revel in torment of the injuring party that has been caused by oneself. What distinguishes revenge from pure malice and somewhat excuses it is the semblance of right: if the act of revenge were inflicted legally—i.e. in accordance with a previously determined and recognised rule and within a union that has sanctioned it—it would be punishment, and thus would be right.

Beyond the suffering described, along with malice rooted in a very intense will and thus inseparable from it, there is yet another entirely distinct and particular pain associated with every evil action—whether a mere egoistic injustice or pure malice—which is called 'sting of conscience' or (if it lasts longer) 'remorse'.¹ [AS now proceeds to expound something which he (complicatedly) says arises from things he has already said in this Book, namely that:] in the sting of conscience two components are distinguished, though they entirely coincide and must be thought in complete union with one another.

(i) Though the veil of Maya tightly envelops the evil person's understanding, i.e. though he is caught up in the individuation-maker in accordance with which he views his person as absolutely distinct and widely separated from every other—

a way of thinking that he holds to with all his might because it alone fits and supports his egoism, his thought being almost always corrupted by will

—there nonetheless stirs within his innermost consciousness the secret presentiment •that such an order of things is only

¹ [Because the difference between 'sting of conscience' (*Gewissensbiss*) and 'remorse' (*Gewissensangst*) is only one of longevity, it has no theoretical importance for AS; which explains why we shall soon see him first discussing one and then writing as though he had discussed the other.]

a phenomenon, and that the state of affairs *in itself* is quite otherwise; •that, however much time and space separate him from other individuals and the countless torments they suffer (indeed suffer through him) and display them as entirely foreign to him, it is nevertheless—in itself and apart from presentation and its forms—the **one will for life** that makes its appearance in all of them and, failing to recognise itself, turns its weapons against itself and by seeking greater well-being in one of its phenomena imposes the greatest of suffering on others. •It is also a presentiment •that he, the evil person, *is* this whole will, and consequently is not only the tormentor but the tormented, from whose suffering he is separated and held free only by a deceptive dream whose form is space and time; but •that the dream fades away and then he is in reality bound to pay for his pleasure with torment, and •that he must undergo any suffering that he recognises as even possible, because

- the difference between possibility and actuality, like
- the difference between proximity and distance in time and space,

are not differences *in themselves* but only products of the individuation-maker. This is the truth that is mythically expressed in reincarnation, i.e. adapted to the GP and thereby transposed into the form pertaining to the phenomenon; but it has its purest expression, free of all admixture, in that obscurely felt but inconsolable torment that is called ‘remorse’.

(ii) Remorse also arises from a second item of immediate knowledge, closely tied to the first, namely knowledge of how strongly the will for life affirms itself in the evil individual, which goes far beyond his individual phenomenon to the point of complete denial of the same will appearing in other individuals. Consequently, the evil-doer’s inner horror at his own deed, which he seeks to conceal from himself, contains—

along with that presentiment of the nullity and mere illusoriness of the individuation-maker and of the latter’s differentiation between himself and others

—also knowledge of the intensity of his own will, of how violently he has taken hold of life and fastened himself to it; this very life whose frightful side he sees before him in the torment of those oppressed by him. . . . He recognises himself as a concentrated phenomenon of the will for life, feels the degree to which he is given up to life and with it also to the countless sufferings that are essential to it; for it has infinite time and infinite space in which to turn possibilities into actualities, and to transform all the torments that he now merely *recognises* into ones that he *feels*. The millions of years of constant rebirth exist merely in conception, just as the entire past and future exist only in conception: achieved time, the form of the phenomenon of will, is only *the present*, and for the individual time is always new—he constantly finds himself risen anew. For life is inseparable from the will for life, and its form is only the *Now*. Death. . . .is like the setting of the sun, which seems to be devoured by the night but actually. . . .burns without remission, brings new days to new worlds, always rising and always setting. Beginning and end concern only the individual, by means of time, the form of this phenomenon with respect to presentation. Beyond time lies only

- will, Kant’s *thing in itself*, and
- its adequate objectivisation, Plato’s *idea*.

Therefore suicide provides no rescue: what each in his innermost being *wills*, that must he *be*; and what each *is*, that is just what he *wills*.

Thus, besides the merely felt knowledge of the illusoriness and nullity of presentation’s forms,self-knowledge of one’s own will and its degree gives conscience its sting. The course of someone’s life produces the image of his empirical

character, the original of which is the intelligible character, and the wicked person takes fright at this image—whether it is produced •in broad strokes, so that the world shares his abhorrence, or •in ones so small that he alone sees them. . . . What has happened in the past would be a matter of indifference, as a mere phenomenon, and could not cause remorse, if character weren't felt to be free of all time, and unalterable in its course so long as it doesn't deny itself. For this reason, things that happened long ago still weigh on the conscience. The prayer 'Lead me not into temptation' means: 'Let me not see who I am.'

Proportionally to the violence with which the evil person affirms •the will for• life, and which is displayed to him in the suffering he inflicts on others, he measures how far he is from surrendering and denying that very will—a denial that offers the only possible redemption from the world and its torment. He sees to what extent he belongs to the world and how firmly he is bound to it: the *known* suffering of others wasn't able to move him; he is at the mercy of life and *felt* suffering. It remains in question whether this will ever break and overcome the intensity of his will.

This discussion of the meaning and inner nature of evil—which as mere feeling (i.e. not as clear, abstract knowledge) is the content of remorse—will become even clearer and more complete through the consideration •of *good* as a property of human will, and finally •of the complete resignation and saintliness that comes from goodness after it has reached the highest degree. For opposites always illuminate one another, and—as has splendidly said—day reveals both itself and the night.

66. Virtue. True goodness

A morality without a grounding—thus mere *moralising*—can have no effect, for it doesn't motivate. A morality that *does* motivate can do so only by working on self-love. But nothing that originates in that way has any moral worth. From this it follows that genuine virtue can't come from morality or from any kind of *abstract* knowledge; it has to come from the *intuitive* knowledge that recognises in other individuals the same nature as one's own.

For virtue does indeed come from knowledge, but not from knowledge that is abstract, communicable by words. . . . Ethical discourses or sermons can no more create a virtuous person than all the aesthetic theories since Aristotle's have produced a poet! For concepts are unfruitful for the true and inner nature of virtue, just as they are for art, and can only serve in a subordinate duty as tools for carrying out and maintaining what has been otherwise recognised and resolved. *Velle non discitur*. Abstract dogmas have no influence on virtue, i.e. on goodness of disposition: false ones don't disturb it, and true ones are unlikely to promote it. And it would be a really bad thing if the main issue for human life—its ethical and eternally valid worth—depended on something the achievement of which was as subject to chance as dogmas, doctrines of faith, philosophical theories. The only value dogmas have for morality is this: a person who has become virtuous through a different kind of knowledge (to be discussed shortly) is provided by dogmas with a schema, a formula, in accordance with which he can give his own faculty of reason an account—mostly fictitious—of his non-egoistic doings, the nature of which his reason, i.e. he himself, does not *grasp*.¹ He has accustomed his reason

¹ [AS here uses and emphasizes the verb *begreifen*, cognate with *Begriff* = 'concept'.]

to rest content with this ·mostly fictitious stuff·.

Dogmas can indeed strongly influence *conduct*, external doings, as also can habit and example—

(the latter because the ordinary person doesn't trust his own judgment, being aware of its weakness, but follows only his own or others' experience),

—but none of these affect a person's *frame of mind*. Abstract knowledge provides only motives; but—as I have shown above—motives can only change the direction of the will, not the will itself. . . . However much dogmas steer a person, what he really and in general wills always remains the same; he has merely had different thoughts about how to attain it, and a imaginary motives guide him just as b real ones do. For example, it makes no difference to his ethical worth whether he

a makes great contributions to the helpless, firmly convinced that he'll get it back tenfold in a future life, or

b spends the same amount improving a country estate, which yields interest that is indeed deferred but all the more sure and sizeable.

And the true believer who commits heretics to the flames is as much a murderer as the bandit who does it for gain. [AS elaborates this a little, saying that those who do dreadful things so as to earn a place in heaven are acting egoistically, differing from bandits 'only by the absurdity of their means'. He sums up:] The will can be reached only through motives; but they do not change the will, only how it expresses itself. *Velle non discitur*.

But in the case of *good* deeds whose doer appeals to dogmas, one always has to decide whether in doing this he is •stating his real motives for his conduct or •telling his reason that he acts as he does because he is *good*, when really his good deed has an entirely different source. In the latter case

he doesn't know how to explain it in proper terms because he is no philosopher, but would still like to have some thoughts on the matter. It is very hard to discover which of these is right, because the difference depends on his inner state of mind. Thus we can hardly ever make an accurate moral judgment on the conduct of others, and seldom on our own.

The actions and ways of behaving of an individual and of a people can be greatly modified by dogmas, example, and custom. But all deeds are in themselves mere empty images, and get moral significance only from the frame of mind leading to them. The moral status can be entirely the same while there is a great difference in the external phenomenon. It can happen that of two people who have the same degree of malice, one dies ·tortured to death· on the wheel while the other dies peacefully in the bosom of his family. The same source of malice can show up in one people in brutish traits, in murder and cannibalism, while in another it appears finely and softly in miniature, in court intrigues, oppressions, and delicate plots of every kind; the inner nature remains the same. It is conceivable that a perfect state, or even a completely firm belief in a dogma of rewards and punishments after death, would prevent all crime; politically, much would be gained by this, morally nothing at all; it would only show the will being impeded throughout life.

So genuine goodness of disposition, disinterested virtue, and pure nobility don't come from abstract knowledge; but they come from knowledge nevertheless—namely from •an immediate and intuitive knowledge that can't be reached through reason and can't be reasoned from; •a knowledge that can't be communicated because it isn't abstract, but must arise in each person for himself, and so doesn't find its true and adequate expression in words, but only in actions, in a person's conduct throughout his life. We who are trying

to construct a *theory* of virtue, and so have to give abstract expression to the nature of the knowledge it is based on, won't be able in that way to present *the knowledge itself* but only *the concept of it*; so we always start from the conduct in which it becomes visible, taking that to be the sole adequate expression of that knowledge; and we can only explain and interpret the conduct, i.e. state in abstract terms what it really involves.

Before coming to discuss true goodness as opposed to the evil I have been depicting, I need to say a little about something that comes between those two, namely the mere negation of evil. This is **justness**.¹ I have already said enough about what right and wrong are; so here I can say briefly that anyone who voluntarily acknowledges the purely moral boundary between wrong and right, putting it into application even where no state or other power secures it—

and consequently, according to my explanation, never going so far in affirming his own will as to deny that displayed in another individual

—is **just**. He is not willing to increase his own well-being by making others suffer; i.e. he will commit no crimes, will respect the rights, respect the property of everyone.

We see, then, •that for a just person the individuation-maker is no longer an absolute partition, •that he doesn't affirm only the phenomenon of his own will and deny all others, •that others are not for him mere masks whose nature is entirely distinct from his own. (In this he is unlike the evil person.) Rather, he shows through his conduct that he recognises his own essence—namely, the will to life as *thing in itself*—in others who are given to him as mere presentations. So he finds himself again in them, up to a certain point—namely, to the point of non-wrongdoing, i.e.

of non-injury. To just this degree, then, he sees through the individuation-maker, the veil of Maya; to this extent he equates the nature beyond him with his own; he does not injure it.

If we look into the innermost being of this justness, we'll find the intention not to go so far in affirming **a** one's own will as to deny the phenomena of **b** others' wills by forcing **b** them to serve **a** it. So the just person will want to give as much to others as he enjoys from them. The highest degree of this justness of disposition—

which is in fact always coupled with true goodness, the character of which is not merely negative, as rightness is [see chapter 62]

—goes so far that the just person •casts doubt on his rights to inherited property, •wants to maintain his body only by its own forces, mental or corporeal, •reproaches himself for every service by others, for every luxury, and eventually •embraces voluntary poverty. Thus we see Pascal, when he turned towards asceticism, no longer willing to be served even though he had servants enough; despite his chronic ill-health made his own bed, fetched his meals from the kitchen, etc. Similarly, it is reported that many Hindus, even Rajas with great wealth, spend it only in support of their family, court, and servants, and with strict scrupulousness follow the maxim to eat nothing but what they have sowed and reaped with their own hands. A certain misunderstanding underlies this. For an individual can, just because he is rich and powerful, do so much service to the whole of human society that it counterbalances the inherited wealth that the society enables him to keep safely. The inordinate justness of such Hindus is really more than justness; it is actual renunciation, denial of the will for life, asceticism; I'll

¹ [*Gerechtigkeit*. This has a verbal overlap—not reproducible in English—with *recht* = 'right' and *unrecht* = 'wrong'.]

speak of this later. Conversely, by contrast, pure idleness and living with inherited wealth through the efforts of others, can be seen as morally wrong, although it must remain a right according to man-made laws.

We have found that voluntary justness has its innermost origin in seeing through the individuation-maker to a certain degree, while the unjust remain altogether caught up in it. It can be seen through not only to this degree but also to the higher degree that drives a person to positive benevolence and beneficence, to love of humanity; and this can occur however *strong and energetic in itself* the will is that appears in such an individual. Knowledge can always keep him in balance, teach him to resist the temptation to do wrong, and even produce every degree of goodness, indeed of resignation. So it is quite wrong to think of the good person as fundamentally a weaker phenomenon of will than the evil one is; rather, it is knowledge that masters the blind press of the will within him. Some individuals merely *seem* to have a good frame of mind because of the weakness of the will that appears in them; but what they really are soon shows itself in their being incapable of any considerable self-conquest for the sake of performing a just or good deed.

But when as a rare exception we encounter someone who has a considerable income but uses only a little of it for himself and gives all the rest to the poor, while denying himself many pleasures and comforts, and we try to understand the conduct of this person, then—ignoring any dogmas that he may use to make it comprehensible to his reason—we will find the simplest general expression and the essential character of his conduct to be this: *he makes less distinction than is usually made between himself and others*. If this distinction is so great in the eyes of many others that

- the suffering of others is
 - an immediate pleasure for the malicious,

- a welcome means toward his own well-being for the unjust,
- something the merely just individual stops at so as not to cause it;
- most people know and are familiar with the countless sufferings of others in their vicinity but don't undertake to mitigate them because that would involve some sacrifice on their part;
- there seems to them to be a powerful difference between their own *I* and that of others,

to the noble individual we are imagining this difference is not so significant. The individuation-maker, the form of the phenomenon, no longer has him firmly in its grip, and the suffering he sees in others concerns him almost as closely as does his own. He tries to establish a balance between the two—renounces pleasures, makes sacrifices, so as to lessen the sufferings of others. He becomes aware that the difference between himself and others, which is such a great gulf to the evil person, belongs only to a transitory deceptive phenomenon. He knows immediately and without any inferences that the *in-itself* of his own phenomenon is also that of others, namely the will for life that constitutes the essence of every single thing and lives in all of them; and indeed that this extends even to animals and the whole of nature; so he won't give pain even to an animal.

He is now as unlikely to let others starve to death while he himself has enough and to spare as anyone would be to suffer a day of hunger so as to have more than he can enjoy on the following day. Because to anyone who engages in works of love, the veil of Maya has become transparent, and the deception of the individuation-maker has left him. He recognises himself, his *self*, his will, in every being, and consequently in any that are suffering. He is free from the perversity with which the will to live, not recognising

itself, enjoys a fleeting and precarious pleasure *here* in one individual and pays for it with suffering and starvation *there* in another, and thus both inflicts and endures misery, not knowing that like Thyestes it is eagerly devouring its own flesh; and then bemoaning its undeserved suffering *here* and doing wicked things without fear of Nemesis *there*, only because it doesn't recognise itself in the phenomenon of the other, and thus doesn't perceive eternal justice, being caught up in the individuation-maker and thus in the kind of knowledge that is governed by the GP. Being free from this delusion and dazzle of Maya is the same thing as engaging in works of love.

The opposite of pangs of conscience, the origin and significance of which I have elucidated above [chapter 65], is *good conscience*, the satisfaction we feel after every disinterested deed. It arises from the fact that such deeds, just as they come from immediate recognition of our own *essence in itself* in the phenomenon of someone else, also bear witness to this recognition, to our knowing that our true self exists not merely in our own person—in this individual phenomenon—but in everything that lives. The heart feels itself expanded by this, just as it is contracted by egoism. For just as egoism concentrates a person's concern on the particular phenomenon that is his own individual case, where knowledge always confronts him with countless dangers that constantly threaten this phenomenon—making anxiety and care the keynote of his mood—so knowledge of the fact that all living things are his own *essence in itself*, just as much as his own person is, spreads his concern to all living things; and through this his heart is expanded. With this lessening of engagement in one's own self, anxious concern for it is attacked at its root, and limited; hence the peaceful, confident cheerfulness that a virtuous disposition and good conscience provide. . . . The egoist feels himself surrounded

by hostile phenomena that are other than himself, and his hope is centred on his own welfare. The good person lives in a world of friendly phenomena; the welfare of each of them is his own. So even if his knowledge of the human condition doesn't make his over-all state of mind a merry one, the enduring recognition of his own essence in all living things still gives him a certain equanimity and even cheerfulness of mood. For concern over countless phenomena can't cause as much anxiety as that which is concentrated on *one*. The contingencies that happen to individuals collectively get balanced out, while those that happen to the particular individual constitute ·his· good or bad fortune.

If others have advanced moral principles as prescriptions for virtue and laws that *must* be followed, I cannot (I repeat) do the same, because I have no 'ought' or law to prescribe to the eternally free will. But something analogous to it—to a certain extent corresponding to it—does emerge from my system; it is a purely theoretical truth, and my whole exposition can be seen as merely unpacking it. It's the truth that will is the *in-itself* of every phenomenon, but is itself free from the latter's forms and thereby from plurality. As applied to action, I can find no better expression of this truth than the previously mentioned formula of the Veda: *Tat twam asil* ('This is you'). Anyone who can with clear knowledge and steady inner conviction say this of every being he encounters is certain of all virtue and blessedness, and is on the road leading directly to redemption.

But before I continue with that theme, showing **(i)** how love—whose origin and essence we recognise as a penetration [see Glossary] of the individuation-maker—leads to redemption, i.e. to complete surrender of the will for life, i.e. surrender of all willing, and also **(ii)** how another path leads a person less gently but with greater frequency to the same place, I must first state and explain the paradoxical proposition

that **'All love is compassion.'** ·I stress this· not because it is paradoxical, but because it is true and is an essential part of the system I am presenting.¹

67. Compassion. Crying

We have seen how justness comes from a lower degree of penetration of the individuation-maker, and seen that from a higher degree comes the true goodness of disposition that shows itself as pure, i.e. disinterested [see Glossary], love for others. A truly good person regards the fate of other individuals as perfectly on a level with his own; he can never go further than this, because there's no available reason for preferring another individual over himself. But it can certainly happen that a number of other individuals whose well-being or life is in danger can outweigh consideration of one person's welfare. In such a case, a character that has attained to the highest goodness and to perfect nobility will offer his welfare and his life in sacrifice to the welfare of many others: thus died Codros, thus Leonidas, thus Regulus, thus Decius Mus, thus Arnold von Winkelried, thus anyone who goes willingly and knowingly to certain death for his own ·near and dear·, for his fatherland. Also on this level stands anyone who willingly takes on suffering and death in defence of something that touches and rightly belongs to the welfare of all mankind—i.e. maintaining important universal truths and eradicating great errors: thus died Socrates, thus Giordano Bruno; thus many a hero of truth found his death on the pyre, under the hands of priests.

Now it is time to remind the reader, with respect to the paradox stated above, •that we earlier found suffering to be

essential to life as a whole, and inseparable from it, and •that we saw how every desire comes from a need, a lack, a suffering, so that every satisfaction is only the removal of a pain and not the acquiring of a positive happiness; pleasures do indeed tell desire that they are positive goods, but this is a lie, for really they are only negative in nature, only the end of an evil. Therefore, anything that goodness, love, and generosity do for others is always only an alleviation of their sufferings; and consequently the only thing that can ever move someone to good deeds and works of love is *knowledge of the suffering of others*, directly understood from the doer's own suffering and equated with it. From this it results that pure love is by its nature compassion; the suffering that it alleviates may be great or small, and includes all unsatisfied desires. So I don't hesitate to say—

in direct contradiction to Kant, who won't recognise anything as truly good and virtuous unless it has come from abstract reflection, and indeed from the concept of duty and the categorical imperative, and who declares compassion to be a weakness, in no way a virtue

—that mere concepts are as unfruitful for genuine virtue as for genuine art; all true and pure love is compassion, and all love that is not compassion is selfishness. Selfishness and compassion [AS gives their Greek names] are frequently confused. Even genuine friendship is always a mixture of selfishness and compassion: the larger ingredient is the ·selfish· satisfaction in the company of the friend whose individuality agrees with one's own; the compassion shows itself in sincere participation in his welfare and woe, and in the disinterested ·self·-sacrifice that one brings to the latter.

¹ [AS gives 'compassion' in Greek and Latin as well as German. The German *Mitleid* breaks down into 'suffering with', which is also the idea underlying the Latin-derived English 'com-passion'.]

Even Spinoza says: 'Benevolence is a desire born of pity.' As confirmation of my paradoxical proposition that all love is compassion, it may be noted that the tone and words of the language and caresses of pure love entirely coincide with the tone of compassion; and, incidentally that in Italian the word *pietà* denotes both compassion and pure love.

This is also the place to discuss one of the most striking peculiarities of human nature, crying, which like laughter is one of the expressions that distinguish humans from animals. Crying is in no way a direct expression of pain; for one cries at the very slightest pain. In my opinion, people don't ever cry over the immediately felt pain, but always only over its repetition in memory. That is, the sufferer passes from the pain that is felt, even when it is corporeal, to a mere presentation of it, and *then* finds his own state to be so deserving of compassion that—so he firmly and sincerely believes—if it were someone else's he would come to that person's aid with compassion and love; only it is *himself* that is now the object of his sincere compassion. . . . In this strangely woven mood, where immediately felt suffering returns to perception through a double detour—presented as the suffering of someone else, sympathised with as such, and then suddenly again perceived as directly one's own—nature provides itself with relief through that strange corporeal spasm.

So *crying is compassion for oneself*, or compassion that has been thrown back on its own point of departure. It is therefore conditioned by the capacity for love and compassion and by imagination. So hard-hearted people and those lacking in imagination don't cry easily, and crying is always taken to indicate a certain degree of goodness of character, and disarms anger; because it is felt that anyone who can cry must also be capable of love, i.e. compassion for others, because compassion passes over into the state of mind that

leads one to cry, as I have explained. . . . What I have said is also confirmed by the fact that children who have been hurt usually don't cry until someone commiserates with them; so they are crying not over the pain but over its presentation.

When we are led to cry not over our own suffering but someone else's, this comes from our vividly transporting ourselves in imagination into the position of the sufferer, or seeing in his fate of the lot of humanity as a whole and consequently above all of our own; so that by a wide detour we are after all crying over ourselves, feeling compassion for ourselves. This seems also to be the main reason for the universal, thus natural, fact of crying in cases of death. The bereaved person is not weeping over his loss; if it were, his tears would be egoistic and would shame him, whereas sometimes he is ashamed of *not* crying. In the first instance he does indeed cry over the fate of the person who has just died; but he also cries when death has come as a welcome release after long, heavy, and incurable suffering. For the most part, then, he is gripped by compassion over the lot of humanity as a whole, which is subject to the finitude entailing that every life—so full of endeavour, often so rich in deeds—must be extinguished and come to nothing. But in humanity's lot the mourner sees his own, and all the more, the closer he was to the deceased, and therefore the most if it was his father. . . .

68. Virtue. Asceticism. Saintliness

After this digression about the identity of pure love and sympathy, the final return of which upon our own individuality produces the phenomenon of weeping, I resume the thread of my interpretation of the ethical significance of action, in order to show how the source from which all goodness, love, virtue, and generosity originate also eventually generates what I call

‘denial of the will for life’. Just as we earlier saw hate and malice conditioned by egoism, and this resting on knowledge caught up in the individuation-maker, so we found the origin and essence of justness—and of love and generosity up to their highest degrees—to be penetration [see Glossary] of that individuation-maker. That penetration, by abolishing the distinction between one’s own individuality and that of others, makes possible and explains the complete goodness of disposition that extends to the most disinterested love and most generous self-sacrifice in the interests of others.

If this penetration of the individuation-maker—this direct knowledge of the identity of will in all its phenomena—is present with the highest degree of clarity, it will at once show an influence on the will that goes even further. Namely, if

that veil of Maya, the individuation-maker, is so thoroughly lifted from someone’s eyes that he no longer makes the egoistic distinction between his own person and others, but participates in other individuals’ suffering as much as in his own, and is thereby not only benevolent in the highest degree but even ready to sacrifice his own individuality whenever such a sacrifice will save a number of others,

then it automatically follows that

such a person—who recognises in all beings himself, his innermost and true self—regards the endless sufferings of all living things as his own, and so must take on himself the entire world’s pain.

No suffering is any longer foreign to him. All the torments of others that he *sees* and is so seldom able to alleviate, all the torments that he knows about only *indirectly*, indeed all the ones that he recognises only as *possible*, affect his spirit as if they were his own.

It is no longer the changing joy and sorrow of his own person that he has his sight on, as is the case with someone

still caught up in egoism; rather, since he sees through the individuation-maker, everything lies equally close to him. He recognises the whole, comprehends its nature, and finds it to be in the grip of a constant passing-away, vain striving, inner conflict, and continual suffering; he sees, wherever he looks, human suffering and animal suffering, and a vanishing world. But he is now as close to all this as the egoist is to his own person. How then could he, with such knowledge of *the world*, affirm *this one life* through constant acts of will, thereby pressing it ever more firmly to himself? Thus if someone who is still caught up in the individuation-maker, in egoism, recognises only individual things and their relation to his person, and if those things become ever-renewed motives of his willing, then by contrast the just-described knowledge of the whole, of the nature of *things in themselves*, becomes a quieter of all and every willing. The will now turns away from •life; it now shudders at the pleasures in which it recognises •its affirmation. Anyone who gets this far attains to the state of voluntary renunciation, resignation, true composure and complete willlessness.

If those of us who are still caught in the veil of Maya sometimes—in the hard experience of our own suffering or in the vivid recognition of the suffering of others—come close to recognising the nullity and bitterness of life, and want to destroy the sting of our desires, deny admission to all suffering, and purify and sanctify ourselves by complete and final renunciation, then before long the deception of the phenomenon entangles us and its motives get the will moving again; we can’t tear ourselves loose. We are drawn back to it with newly tightened fetters by

- the lures of hope,
- the flattery of the present,
- the sweetness of pleasure,
- the well-being that falls to our lot amidst the sorrows

of a suffering world governed by chance and error.

Therefore Jesus says: 'It is easier for a rope to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'¹ If we compare life to a circular track of glowing coals, with a few cool places, which track we had unceasingly to run, someone who is caught up in the delusion is consoled by the cool place where he is standing right now or that he sees close ahead of him, and he goes on running the course. But anyone who sees through the individuation-maker and knows the nature of things in themselves, and thereby of the whole, is no longer receptive to such consolation; he sees himself in all places at once, and leaves the course.

His will turns around, no longer affirms its own essence that is mirrored in the phenomenon, but denies it. The phenomenon that shows this happening is the passage from virtue to asceticism. It is no longer enough for him to love others as himself and to do as much for them as for himself; there arises within him a horror of the will for life, the nature that is expressed in the phenomenon that is himself, the kernel and inner nature of that world which is recognised as full of misery. He thus disowns the nature that appears in him and is expressed through his body, and his conduct attacks—comes into open contradiction with—the phenomenon that he is. Essentially nothing but a phenomenon of will, he ceases to will anything, guards against attaching his will to anything, seeks to confirm in himself the greatest indifference towards all things.

His body, healthy and strong, expresses the sexual impulse through genitals; but he denies the will and gives the lie to his body; he doesn't want sexual satisfaction under any condition. Voluntary, complete chastity is the first step

of asceticism or denial of the will for life. So its denial of affirmation of the will goes beyond the individual's life, and indicates that along with the life of this body the will of which it is the phenomenon is also nullified. Nature, always true and straightforward [*naiv*], says that if this maxim were universal, the human race would die out. And in accordance with what I said in Book II [chapter 24] about the interconnection of all the phenomena of will, I think I may assume that, with the highest phenomenon of will, its weaker reflection, the animal world, would also fall away. . . .

With the complete nullification of knowledge, the rest of the world would then of itself vanish into nothing; for without subject, no object. I would like to refer here to a passage in the Veda: 'Just as in this world hungry children press about their mother, so all beings wait in longing for the sacred sacrifice.' Sacrifice means resignation in general, and the rest of nature has to await *its* redemption by man, who is both priest and sacrifice. Indeed, it merits mention as a most remarkable fact that this thought has also been expressed by the admirable and immeasurably deep Angelus Silesius, in the verse headed 'Man brings all things to God'. It reads:

'Man! All things love you; around you they throng
in force:

All of them run to you, to reach God in their
course.'

But a still greater mystic, Meister Eckhart, . . . says the same thing in exactly the sense discussed here:

'I confirm this by Christ when he says "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Thus should the good man carry

¹ [The King James version has 'It is easier for a *camel*. . . .' AS is following the view of some scholars that there was a mix-up between a Greek word meaning 'camel' and a very similar one meaning 'rope'.]

all things to God, into their first origin. The masters certify to us that all created things are made for the sake of man. It is seen in all created things that one makes use of another: the cow of the grass, the fish of the water, the bird of the air, the wild animal of the forest. Thus all creatures come to be of use to the good man: one creature in another, a good man carries them to God.'

He means: in exchange for redeeming the animals, man makes use of them on his own terms in this life. It seems to me that the difficult passage from the Bible at Romans 8:21-24 is to be interpreted in this sense. [That passage in the King James version reads as follows: 'Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?' AS goes on to say that Buddhism has plenty of texts supporting the view he is expounding here, and quotes one.]

Asceticism then shows itself further in voluntary and intentional poverty—

which does not arise only *per accidens* [see Glossary] (one's possessions given away in order to mitigate the suffering of others) but is here indeed a purpose in itself)

—which is meant to serve as a constant mortification of the will, so that the satisfaction of desires, the sweetness of life, no longer arouses the will which self-knowledge has come to abhor. Someone who has reached this point still always

feels—as an animate body, as a concrete phenomenon of will—the disposition to willing of every sort; but he intentionally suppresses it, forcing himself to do nothing of what he would like to do, and to do everything that he wouldn't like to do, even if only for the purpose of mortifying the will. Since he denies the will that appears in his person, he won't resist when someone else does the same, i.e. inflicts wrong upon him. So every suffering that comes to him from without—by chance or the malice of others—is welcome to him; he gladly receives every harm, every humiliation, every injury, as an opportunity to assure himself that he no longer affirms the will but gladly takes the side of any enemy of the phenomenon of will that is his own person. He bears such humiliation and suffering with inexhaustible patience and meekness, returns good for evil without making a show of it, and doesn't allow the flames of anger to spring up in him any more than he does the flames of desire.

Along with the will itself he also mortifies its objectivisation, the body: he nourishes it sparingly, lest its excessive vigour and prosperity should animate and arouse more strongly the will of which it is merely the expression and the mirror. Thus he takes to fasting, indeed to castigation of the body and self-torture, in order more and more to break and kill the will by constant sacrifice and suffering—the will that he recognises and detests as the source of his own and of the world's suffering existence.

When death finally arrives,

dissolving this phenomenon of will whose being had (through free self-denial) long since been brought down to the weak residue that makes its appearance as this body's ·merely· being alive,

it is most welcome, gladly accepted as a longed-for deliverance. It doesn't merely bring to an end the phenomenon (as it does with others ·who are unlike the ascetic we are now

looking at·; it eliminates the very nature that still had a weak existence in the phenomenon and through it; this last slight bond is now broken. For someone who ends in this way, the world has ended with him.

And what I have depicted here with feeble tongue and only in a general way is not an invented philosophical fable, and not only of today. No, it was the enviable life of many saints and beautiful souls among the Christians, and even more among the Hindus and Buddhists and adherents of other faiths as well. However different were **a** the dogmas impressed on their reason, **b** the inner, immediate, intuitive knowledge from which alone all virtue and saintliness can proceed was expressed in the same way, namely through their way of life. For here too we see the great difference between **b** intuitive and **a** abstract knowledge—so important in all my considerations and all-pervasive, but until now too little noticed ·by me·. Between the two is a wide abyss which, as regards knowledge of the nature of the world, only philosophy crosses. Everyone is really conscious of all philosophical truths **b**intuitively, or *in concreto*, but to bring them into his **a** abstract knowledge, into reflection, is the business of the philosopher, who can't go further and shouldn't ·even try·.

This may be the first time that—abstractly and free of anything mythical—the inner nature of

- saintliness,
- self-renunciation,
- the killing of self-will,
- asceticism

has been explained as **denial of the will for life** occurring after complete knowledge of one's own essence has become a quieter of all one's willing. Those saints and ascetics have all immediately recognised and pronounced it through their deeds. With the same inner knowledge, they discoursed

in very different languages, according to the dogmas they had taken up into their reason, so that an Indian saint, a Christian one, a follower of the Lama, are sure to give very different accounts of their own actions; but this makes no difference to the fact of the matter. A saint may be full of the most absurd superstition, or he may instead be a philosopher: it is all the same. His conduct alone authenticates him as a saint; for, morally speaking, his saintliness comes not from •abstract but from •intuitively grasped immediate knowledge of the world and its nature, and is only *interpreted* by him through some dogma for the satisfaction of his reason. So there is as little need for the saint to be a philosopher as for the philosopher to be a saint, just as there is no need for a perfectly beautiful man to be a great sculptor, or for a great sculptor to be a beautiful man. In general, it is strange to demand that a moralist should possess every virtue that he recommends. To present the entire nature of the world in concepts—abstractly, generally, and clearly—and thus to store up, as it were, a reflected image of it in permanent concepts, always available to reason: this and nothing other is philosophy. . . .

The account I have given of the denial of the will for life—or of the conduct of a beautiful soul, of a resigned, voluntarily penitent saint—is only abstract and general, and therefore cold. Just as the knowledge from which the denial of the will comes is intuitive and not abstract, so also that denial finds its complete expression not in abstract concepts, but only in conduct and life-style. Therefore, in order to understand more fully what we philosophically call 'denial of the will for life', one has to become acquainted with examples from experience and from reality. They won't, of course, be met with in everyday experience: 'For all excellent things are as difficult as they are rare', as Spinoza superbly says. Therefore—unless a notably happy chance makes

one an eye-witness—one will have to settle for *descriptions* of the lives of such people. Indian literature, as we see from the little we know of it through translations, is very rich in descriptions of the lives of saints and penitents. . . . Among Christians there is no lack examples that illustrate this. Read the (usually badly written) biographies of those persons who are sometimes called ‘holy souls’, sometimes ‘pietists’, ‘quietists’, ‘devout enthusiasts’, etc. Collections of such biographies have been made at various times [AS cites two of them]. Among these should be counted the biography of Saint Francis of Assisi, that true personification of asceticism and example for all mendicant monks. The account of his life by his younger contemporary Saint Bonaventure, also famous as a scholastic, was recently republished, not long after there appeared in France a careful, detailed biography of him, making use of all sources,. [AS gives details of both these publications.] —As an oriental parallel to these monastic writings, we have Spence Hardy’s extremely readable *Eastern monachism, an account of the order of mendicants founded by Gotama Budha* (1850) [AS gives this title in its original English]. It shows us the same thing in different dress. We also see how little difference it makes whether it comes from a theistic or from an atheistic religion.

But above all I can recommend the autobiography of Madame de Guyon as a special and exceedingly full example and practical illustration of the conceptions I have established. To become acquainted with this beautiful and great soul, whose memory constantly fills me with awe, and to do justice to the excellence of her disposition while making

allowance for the superstition of her reason, is sure to be a delight to persons of the better sort, just as that book was sure always to be looked down on by those who think in common terms, i.e. the majority. For no-one can value anything that isn’t to some extent like himself and that he isn’t at least drawn to. This holds as much in ethical matters as in intellectual ones. To a certain extent, one could even consider the well-known French biography of Spinoza as a relevant example, if we use as a key to it the noble opening of his unsatisfactory treatise *Of the emendation of the intellect*, a passage that I can at the same time recommend as the most effective means I know for calming the storm of one’s passions.¹ Finally, the great Goethe himself, so much a Greek he is, did not regard it as unworthy of himself to show us this loveliest side of humanity in the clarifying mirror of the literary arts, giving us an idealised depiction of the life of Fräulein Klettenberg in his *Confessions of a Beautiful Soul* and later in his autobiography also gave historical details about her, as he also twice relates the life of Saint Philip Neri.

World history, to be sure, must always remain silent about the people whose way of life is the best illustration, and the only adequate one, of this important point in my line of thought. For the *material* of world history is entirely different from this. Indeed, it is flatly contrary to it, consisting not in

- denial and surrender of the will for life, but
- its affirmation and appearance in countless individuals in which its conflict with itself shows up with complete clarity at the highest peak of its objectifica-

¹ [The ‘noble’ opening runs as follows (in Curley’s translation): ‘After experience had taught me that all the things which regularly occur in ordinary life are empty and futile, and I saw that all the things which were the cause or object of my fear had nothing of good or bad in themselves, except insofar as [my] mind was moved by them, I resolved at last to try to find out whether there was anything which would be the true good, capable of communicating itself, and which alone would affect the mind, all others being rejected—whether there was something which, once found and acquired, would continuously give me the greatest joy, to eternity.’]

tion, setting before our eyes

- now the superiority of the individual through his cleverness,
- now the power of the crowd through its mass,
- now the power of chance personified as fate, and
- always the the vanity and emptiness of the whole effort.

But what we aim to do here is not to follow the thread of phenomena in time, but as philosophers to examine •the ethical significance of conduct, taking •this as the only measure of what is significant and important to us. So we won't let the voice of the permanent majority—the vulgar and dull—deter us from recognising that

the greatest, most important, and most significant phenomenon that the world can display is not the world-conqueror but the world-subduer; nothing but the quiet, unobserved way of life of someone who has acquired the knowledge which leads him to surrender and deny the will to live which fills everything and strives and strains in all, first gaining freedom here in him alone, so that his conduct becomes the exact opposite of the ordinary.

In this respect, therefore, those accounts of the lives of holy, self-denying people—badly written, as they are usually are, and indeed mixed with superstition and nonsense—are yet for the philosopher, because of the significance of the subject, incomparably more instructive and more important than even Plutarch and Livy.

I have in an abstract and general way described something as 'denial of the will for life'; but we'll get a fuller and more definite knowledge of this if we attend to •ethical precepts that have been offered in this sense and to •people who were full of this spirit; and attending to these will

show how old my view is, though the purely philosophical expression of it may be new. What lies nearest to hand is Christianity, whose ethics are entirely in the spirit I'm talking about, and lead not only to the highest degree of love of humanity but also to renunciation. The *seed* of the latter side •of Christianity• is indeed already clearly present in the writings of the apostles, but it is not *fully developed* or clearly stated until a considerable time later. We find prescribed by the apostles

- love for one's neighbour as equivalent to self-love,
- beneficence,
- repayment of hate with love and beneficence,
- patience,
- meekness,
- submitting to all possible injuries without resistance,
- abstemiousness in eating so as to suppress desire, and
- resisting the sex drive (entirely, if possible).

We already see here the first levels of asceticism, or of real *denial of the will*—which is exactly the same as what the gospels called 'renouncing oneself and taking up the cross' (Matthew 16:24–5; Mark 8:34–5; Luke 9:23–4, 14:26–7, 33). This orientation soon developed more and more, and led to the origination of penitents and anchorites, and to monasticism, which was pure and saintly in itself but for just that reason was unsuited to the greatest portion of humanity; so that what developed from it could only be hypocrisy and wickedness, for *abusus optimi pessimus* [Latin for 'the abuse of the best is the worst']. In the further development of Christianity we see the seed of asceticism develop into full blossom in the writings of the Christian saints and mystics. These preach

- purest love and utter renunciation,
- total voluntary poverty,

- true composure,
- complete indifference to all worldly things,
- dying to one's own will and being reborn in God,
- totally forgetting one's own person and immersing oneself in the contemplation of God.

.... Nowhere is this developing spirit of Christianity more completely and powerfully pronounced than it is in the writings of the German mystics, thus of Meister Eckhart and in the rightly famous ·14th century· book *The German Theology*, of which Luther says—in the preface he wrote for it—that from this book he had learned more about what God, Christ and man are than he learned from any other books except for the Bible and the writings of Augustine. . . . The precepts and doctrines contained in it are the most complete articulation, originating in a deeply internal conviction, of what I have presented as denial of the will for life. [AS says that this work has only recently appeared in a decent edition, and that it should be studied in that form before being written about 'with Jewish-Protestant confidence'. He also praises other works expressing Christian asceticism.]

In my opinion, the doctrines of these genuine Christian mystics relate to those of the New Testament as the alcohol relates to the wine. Or: what we see as if through veils and fog in the New Testament meets us in the works of the mystics uncovered, in full clarity and distinctness. . . .

But we find what I have called 'denial of the will for life' in ages-old works in the Sanskrit language—unfolded still further, more many-sided in its pronouncements, and more vividly depicted than could have been the case in the Christian church and the western world. That this important ethical view of life could be more thoroughly developed and more decisively expressed here ·in the Sanskrit writings·

is perhaps mainly due to the fact that it is not limited here by an entirely foreign element, as the doctrine of the Jewish faith is within Christianity. The sublime author of Christianity, partly consciously and perhaps partly even unconsciously, had to accommodate and adapt himself to the Jewish element, so that Christianity was formed out of two very heterogeneous constituents. Of these I would prefer to reserve the label 'Christianity' for the purely ethical constituent, distinguishing it from the pre-existing Jewish dogmatism. It has often been feared—especially these days—that that superb and salutary religion has fallen into complete decline; and if it has, I would seek the reason for this solely in the fact that it does not consist of one simple element but rather of two that have quite different origins and came to form a compound only through an accident of history.¹ The compound was bound to come apart because of the difference in how the two parts have related to and reacted against the advance of the spirit of the times; but even after this dissolution the purely ethical part must always remain undamaged, because it is indestructible.

Now in the ethics of the Hindus, . . . we see prescribed:

- love of one's neighbor with utter renunciation of all self-love,
- love not limited to the human race but encompassing all living things,
- beneficence to the point of giving away one's hard-won daily earnings,
- boundless patience towards all who inflict injury,
- repayment of all evil, no matter how wicked, with goodness and love,
- voluntary and glad endurance of every humiliation,
- abstention from all meat-eating,

¹ [nur mittelst des Weltlaufs = strictly 'only by means of the course of the world'.]

- complete chastity and renunciation of all sensual pleasure for anyone who strives after true saintliness,
- surrender of all possessions,
- forsaking every dwelling-place, and all kin,
- deep unboken solitude, spent in silent contemplation with voluntary penance and terrible slow self-torture. . . .

[AS gives gruesome details of that. Then:] And these precepts, whose origin reaches back four millennia, are still today—even after the Hindu nation has been broken into many parts—observed by individuals to even the utmost extremes. Something that demands the hardest sacrifices, and yet has for so long remained in practice among a people with many millions of members, cannot be a mere whim, but must have its basis in the nature of humanity. But besides this, one cannot marvel enough at the uniformity that one finds in reading about the life of a Christian penitent or saint and that of an Indian one. With such fundamentally different dogmas, customs, and circumstances. the striving and inner life of the two is entirely the same. So also with the precepts of the two. [AS gives some details about this, and concludes:] So much agreement across such different times and peoples is a factual proof that what is expressed here is not—as optimistic banality would like to maintain—a contorted and demented state of mind, but rather an aspect of human nature that is essential to it but shows up only rarely because of its excellence.¹

I have now cited the sources from which one can—drawing directly from life—learn to know the phenomena in which denial of the will for life is displayed. In some respects this is the most important point in my whole work; yet I have presented it only in general terms, because it is better •to

refer to those who speak from immediate experience than •to allow this book to swell needlessly with a weaker repeat of what they have said.

I want to add only a little to my general characterisation of their state. Just as we saw above that

the evil person, through the intensity of his willing, suffers constant, consuming, inner torment, and eventually—when all objects of willing are exhausted—cools the fierce thirst of self-will by the sight of the torment of others,

so on the contrary

someone in whom denial of the will for life has risen—however impoverished, joyless, and full of sacrifice his state may be when viewed from outside—is full of inner joy and true heavenly peace.

It is not the restless press of life, the rejoicing in pleasure, that has intense suffering as its preceding or following condition, such as constitutes the way of life of men with a lust for life; rather, it is an unshakable peace, a deep calm and inner serenity—a state which, if it comes before our eyes or our imagination, we can only view with the greatest longing, acknowledging it as that which is alone right, infinitely outweighing everything else, something that our better spirit calls us to with its great *sapere aude!* [= 'dare to know',] quoted from Horace. When that happens, we feel that every fulfillment of our desires won from the world is only like alms that keep the beggar alive for today, so that tomorrow he may again go hungry; whereas resignation is like an inherited estate: it relieves its owner from all cares forever.

It may be recalled from Book III that aesthetic pleasure in the beautiful consists mainly in the fact that when we enter

¹ [In giving that reason, AS is relying on something he praised Spinoza for saying three pages back.

into the state of pure contemplation we are for the moment relieved of all willing, i.e. all desires and concerns, as if it had fallen to our lot to be no longer

•the individual whose knowledge is subordinated to the service of its constant willing, the correlative of the particular thing for which objects are motives,

but rather

the eternal subject of knowing purified from will, the correlative of the ·platonian· idea;

and we know that these moments—when we are released from the fierce press of the will and seem to rise up out of earth's heavy atmosphere—are the most blessed that we know. From this we can gather how blessed must be the life of a person whose will is quieted not •for moments, as in enjoyment of the beautiful, but •for ever—indeed ·not merely quieted but· extinguished, down to the last glimmering spark that maintains the body and will be extinguished with it. Such a person who, after many bitter battles against his own nature, has at last completely won, now remains only as a pure knowing subject, an undimmed mirror of the world. No longer can anything make him anxious, or move him; for he has *cut* all the thousand threads of willing that keep us bound to the world and—as desire, fear, envy, anger—pull us this way and that in a state of constant pain. Peacefully smiling, he now gazes back on this world's deceptive images, which were indeed once able to move and torture his spirit, but now stand before him as indifferently as chess pieces after the game has ended, or as the cast-off masquerading dress that had worried and disquieted us the night before in the Carnival. Life and its figures float before him like a fleeting apparition, like a faint morning dream to the half-awake sleeper, through which reality is already glimmering and which can no longer deceive; and they eventually vanish, as the dream does, without being *forced* out of existence. From

these considerations we can come to understand the sense of what Madame Guyon so often expressed toward the end of her autobiography: 'Everything is indifferent to me: I cannot will anything more. I often do not know whether I exist or not.' In order to express how, after the dying away of the will, the death of the body (which is only the phenomenon of the will, and therefore loses all meaning when the will is nullified) can now no longer be a bitter affair, but is rather most welcome, let me set down the words of that saintly penitent herself, although they are not elegantly expressed: 'Glorious noon-day; day where there is no longer any night; life that no longer fears death, in death itself; because death has vanquished death, and someone who has suffered the first death will not taste the second death.' [AS gives this quotation in Guyon's French.]

Still, we should not suppose that once the will to live has been denied—through knowledge that becomes its quieter—this denial no longer wavers, and can be relied on as though one owned it. Rather, it must always be renewed by constant battle. For since the body is the will—only in the form of objectivisation, or as a phenomenon in the world as presentation—as long as the body lives, the whole will to live exists potentially, and constantly strives to become actual, and to burn again with all its ardour. In the life of the saintly person, therefore, we find the depicted repose and blessedness only as the blossom that comes from constantly overcoming the will, and see as the ground from which it sprouts the constant battle against the will for life; for no-one can have lasting peace on earth. We thus see the histories of the inner life of saints full of spiritual conflicts, temptations, and abandonment by grace, i.e. by the kind of knowledge that •makes all motives ineffective, •brings calm as a general quieter of all willing, •provides the deepest peace, and •opens the gate to freedom. Thus too, we see those who have once

succeeded in denying the will keeping themselves on **this path** with every exertion, through self-imposed renunciations of every sort, through a penitent, hard way of life and the selection of that which is unpleasant for them—all to suppress the will that is constantly trying to rise again. They know the value of redemption; so they have an anxious concern for the maintenance of salvation once acquired, a scrupulous conscience over every innocent enjoyment and every stirring of vanity; and even with these people, vanity is what dies last; it is the most indestructible, most active, and most foolish of all human inclinations.

I understand the term *asceticism*, which I use so often, in the narrow sense of

the *intentional* breaking of the will through renouncing the pleasant and seeking out the unpleasant, the self-chosen life of penance and self-castigation for the continual mortification of the will.

And those who have already achieved denial of the will ·in that voluntary way· make efforts to maintain themselves in that state. But suffering in general, as it is imposed by fate ·rather than chosen by the sufferer·, is a **second path** to that denial. Indeed, we can assume that most people reach it only in this way, and that what most often creates utter resignation is not merely known-about suffering but suffering that the person experiences, often when death is near. For only in the few is pure knowledge—

that which, in seeing through the individuation-maker, first produces perfect goodness of disposition and general love for humanity, and finally recognises all the sorrows of the world as one's own

—sufficient to bring about denial of the will. Even for someone who is nearing this point, the bearable state of his own person, the flattery of the moment, the lure of hope, and the repeated offer of satisfaction of the will, i.e. of desire,

are in nearly all cases a constant obstacle to denial of the will and a constant temptation to its renewed affirmation. . . . Usually, therefore, the will must be broken through the greatest personal suffering before its self-denial occurs. *Then* we see someone, after being brought through increasing levels of distress (with the most intense resistance) to the edge of desperation, suddenly •retire into himself, •recognise himself and the world, •change his whole nature, •rise above himself and all suffering, and (as if purified and sanctified by suffering) in inviolable peace, blessedness, and sublimity, •willingly renounce all that he had previously willed with the greatest intensity, and •joyfully receive death. Coming suddenly to the fore out of the purifying flame of suffering, it is the gleam of silver in the denial of the will for life, i.e. in redemption. The great Goethe has given us a clear and visible representation of this denial of the will, brought about by great misfortune and hopeless despair, in the story of the sufferings of Gretchen in his immortal masterpiece *Faust*. I know no parallel to this in poetry. This is a perfect paradigm of the second path to denial of the will—not, like the first, through mere knowledge of the suffering of an entire world, knowledge that one voluntarily acquires, but through one's own personally felt abundance of pain. To be sure, many tragedies conduct their mightily willing hero to this point of complete resignation in the end, where the will for life and its phenomenon usually end simultaneously; but no other depiction known to me brings before our eyes the essence of that transformation, so distinctly and free of all irrelevances, as the part of *Faust* I have referred to.

In real life we see in many of those unfortunates who have to undergo the greatest measure of suffering that after all hope has been entirely taken from them, when they fully understand that they face a shameful, violent, often agonising death on the scaffold, they undergo this kind of

transformation. . . .¹ They now display real goodness and purity of disposition, true abhorrence at the thought of their performing any action that is the least bit bad or uncharitable. They forgive their enemies, even if they are the ones under whom they have innocently suffered; they don't merely 'forgive' them with words and in hypocritical fear before the judges of the underworld, but really forgive them with inner seriousness, wanting no revenge whatsoever. Indeed, their suffering and dying are in the end welcome to them, for denial of the will for life has occurred; they often turn away an offer of rescue, die peacefully, at rest, happy. In their inordinate pain the ultimate secret of life has been revealed to them, namely, that

- misery and wickedness,
- suffering and hate,
- tormented and tormenter,

however different they show themselves to be for knowledge that follows the GP, are in themselves *one*, phenomena of that one will for life that objectifies its self-conflict by means of the individuation-maker. They—the people I am talking about—have become thoroughly acquainted with both sides, the misery and the wickedness, and seeing at last the identity of the two, now turn them both away, denying the will for life. It doesn't matter in the least what myths and dogmas they employ to explain to their reason this intuitive and immediate knowledge and their transformation. . . .

Such purification through suffering can occur without the proximity of death or hopelessness. Even without them, knowledge of the self-contradiction of the will for life can through great misfortune and pain urge itself forcibly upon

us and the pointlessness of all effort be seen. Hence people who had led a most animated life in the press of passions—kings, heroes, adventurers—have often been seen to change suddenly, take up resignation and penance, become hermits and monks. Here belong all genuine conversion anecdotes, e.g. that of Raymond Lully:

He had long been wooing a beautiful woman, who finally admitted him to her room. He went in, anticipating the fulfillment of all his desires, but she uncovered her breast and showed him her bosom horrifically consumed by cancer.

From this moment on, as if he had looked into hell, he was converted, left the court of the king of Majorca, and went into the wilderness to do penance. This tale of conversion is very similar to that of the Abbé Rancé, which I have briefly related elsewhere. When we consider how in each case a passage from life's pleasures to its horrors was the occasion of the conversion, this throws some light on the remarkable fact that the order of the Trappists, by far the strictest of all monastic orders, has been restored by Rancé after its decline, and despite

- revolutions,
- ecclesiastical changes, and
- the spread of unbelief

maintains itself to the present day in its purity and fearful strictness, all this having happened among the French, the nation in Europe with the greatest lust for life, the most cheerful, sensual and frivolous.

But the knowledge of the nature of our existence that I have described can also grow distant again, along with

¹ [The ellipsis replaces •the sentence 'We shouldn't assume that the difference between their character and that of most people is as great as their fate indicates, for their fate is mostly due to circumstances; yet they *are* guilty and to a considerable degree wicked', which is here relegated to a footnote because it is a sheer interruption in what AS is saying; and •another sentence which repeats, almost word for word, the sentence immediately before the ellipsis. There has presumably been a revision-mishap at this point.]

its occasion,¹ and the will for life, and with it one's previous character, can reappear. Thus we see the passionate Benvenuto Cellini

•at one time in prison,

•at another time with a major sickness,

transformed in such a manner, but reverting to his old state after the suffering has vanished. Denial of the will doesn't come from suffering with the necessity of an effect from its cause; rather, the will remains free. For here is the single point where its freedom enters immediately into the realm of phenomena. Thus the so strongly expressed astonishment of Asmus regarding 'transcendental alteration'. For any suffering, it is conceivable that there's a will superior to it in intensity and therefore unconquered by it. Thus Plato tells in the *Phaedo* of those who feast, drink, and enjoy sensuous pleasure up to the moment of their execution, affirming life right up to the point of death. In Cardinal Beaufort Shakespeare brings the frightening end of an unconscionable individual before our eyes; he dies full of despair, no suffering or death being able to break this will, intense to the point of utmost malice.²

The more intense the will, the more glaring the phenomenon of its conflict; and thus the greater the suffering. A world that was the phenomenon of an incomparably more intense will for life than the actual world manifests would

display so much the greater suffering; so it would be a *hell*.

All suffering, since it is a mortification and a call to resignation, has a potentially sanctifying force; and that explains why great misfortune and severe pains just in themselves instill a certain awe. But the sufferer becomes wholly worthy of our awe only when, surveying the course of his life as a chain of sufferings, or grieving over some great and unsalvable pain, he does not

look to the concatenation of circumstances that has plunged his life in particular into sorrow, or dwell on the individual great misfortune that has struck him, for if he does that his knowledge follows the GP and clings to the individual phenomenon; but rather

raises his gaze from the individual to the general, regarding his own suffering only as an example of suffering as a whole,

so that for him, having become ethically speaking a genius, one case counts as equivalent to thousands, and the whole of life—seen as essentially suffering—brings him to resignation. That's why it is awe-inspiring when in Goethe's *Torquato Tasso* the Princess speaks of how her own and her family's life has always been sad and joyless, and regards the matter wholly from the universal point of view.

We always think of a very noble character as having a certain touch of quiet sadness; it's not mere constant vex-

¹ [meaning, presumably, along with awareness of the misfortune and pain that occasions it]

² This refers to *Henry VI* Part 2, act 3, scene 3. The cardinal has been tortured and is near death. His unbroken will is perhaps best expressed by how King Henry deploras it:

O thou eternal Mover of the heavens.
 Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch!
 O, beat away the busy meddling fiend
 That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul.
 And from his bosom purge this black despair!

ation over everyday set-backs—far from it!—for that would be an ignoble trait, indicating a bad disposition; it is rather a knowledge-based awareness of the emptiness of all goods and the suffering of all life, not only one's own. Yet such knowledge can first be awakened by suffering experienced by oneself, especially by a single great one. For example, a single unfulfillable desire brought Petrarch to that resigned sadness concerning the whole of life which speaks to us so touchingly from his works; for the Daphne he pursued had to flee from his hands in order to leave the immortal laurel for him instead of for herself. When the will has been somewhat broken by such a great and irrevocable reverse by fate, almost nothing is willed any more by the person in question and his character shows itself as gentle, sad, noble, resigned. When eventually the misery no longer has any definite object but spreads itself over life as a whole, then it is something like a *going-into-himself*, a withdrawal, a gradual vanishing of the will; it even undermines—quietly but resolutely—the body, which is the will's visible manifestation, so that the person feels a certain loosening of his bonds, a gentle foretaste of death announcing itself as simultaneous dissolution of the body and will. So this misery is accompanied by a secret joy, which I think is what the most melancholy of all peoples has called 'the joy of grief'.¹ But just here lies the reef on which sensibility can be wrecked,² both in life itself and in its depiction in poetry. When someone is always lamenting and always complaining, without getting hold of himself and rising to the level of resignation, he simultaneously loses earth and heaven and is left with a watery sentimentality. Only when •suffering

takes the form of bare pure knowledge, which then brings forth true resignation as a *quieter of the will*, is •it the path to redemption and thus worthy of awe. But the sight of any very unfortunate person makes us feel a certain respect, related to what virtue and generosity make us feel, so that our own fortunate state appears as a reproach. We can't help seeing every suffering, whether felt by ourselves or by others, as an at least possible *approach to virtue and saintliness*, whereas pleasures and worldly satisfactions are seen as a *move away* from them. This goes so far that

anyone who bears some great corporeal suffering, or some heavy spiritual one, indeed anyone who only does hard physical labour by the sweat of his brow and with visible exhaustion, but all of it with patience and without grumbling,

when we regard him attentively seems to us like a kind of invalid who is going through a painful cure, bearing the pain it causes willingly and even with satisfaction, knowing that the more he suffers the more his illness is beaten back; so that the present pain is the measure of his cure.

According to what I have said up to here, denial of the will for life (which is called complete resignation or saintliness) always comes from the quieting of •the will that is the knowledge of •its inner conflict and •its essential pointlessness, which are expressed in the suffering of all living things. The difference between what I have called 'two paths' to that knowledge is that between

a the case where the person merely *knows about* suffering, and voluntarily makes it his own through his penetration of the individuation-maker, and

¹ [AS gives this in English; it is the title of, and final phrase in, a poem by Ossian, a Gaelic poet; it's presumably the Gaels that AS is calling 'the most melancholy'.]

² [slightly expanding the German *die Klippe der Empfindsamkeit*, literally meaning 'the reef [or rock] of sensibility'.]

↳ the case where the knowledge comes from the person's *experiencing* of suffering that is immediately felt by himself.

True salvation, release from life and suffering, is unthinkable without a complete denial of the will. Until that happens, each person is nothing other than this will itself, whose phenomenon is an ephemeral existence—an always pointless, constantly frustrated striving—and what has been depicted as the world full of suffering to which all things irrevocably belong. For we found above that life is always certain for the will for life, and its single actual form is *the present*, from which those things never escape, although birth and death prevail within the phenomenon. The Indian myth expresses this by saying of those who follow path **a** that 'They are reborn'. The significance of the great ethical difference between characters is that the evil person is infinitely far from acquiring the knowledge that leads to denial of the will, so that he is *actually* exposed to all the torments that appear as *possible* in life. For even the present happy state of his person is only a phenomenon and deception of Maya, mediated by the individuation-maker, the beggar's happy dream. The sufferings that he inflicts on others in the intensity and fury of the press of his will are the measure of the sufferings whose experience by him cannot break his will and lead him to eventual denial.¹ All true and pure love, by contrast, indeed even all free rightness of conduct, comes from seeing through the individuation-maker, which when it is a completely clear seeing-through brings complete salvation and redemption, the phenomenon of which is the state of resignation I have described, the unshakable peace that accompanies it, and the greatest joyfulness in death.

69. Suicide

Nothing is more different from

the denial of the will for life that I have depicted. . . ., which is the single act of freedom showing up in the phenomenon. . . .

than

the voluntary elimination of its individual phenomenon: *suicide*.

Far from being a denial of the will, suicide is a phenomenon of powerful affirmation of the will. For the denial of the will has its essence in the person's hatred not of the sufferings but of the enjoyments of life. Someone who commits suicide *wills life*, and is merely dissatisfied with the conditions under which he has it. So he emphatically doesn't give up the will for life; he merely gives up life, by destroying the individual phenomenon. He wills life, wills the unrestricted existence and affirmation of his body; but the web of circumstances doesn't permit this, and he experiences great suffering. The very will for life in this individual phenomenon is so much hampered that it can't put forth its energies. So it decides according to its own nature in itself, which lies outside the domain of the GP and isn't affected by the difference between one individual phenomenon and another; for it is the inner being of the life of all things, and isn't affected by any arising or passing away. For that same firm, inner certainty by which we all live without constant fear of death—the certainty, that is, that will can never fail to have its phenomenon—supports even the deed of suicide. The will for life thus shows up just as much in this commission of suicide (Shiva) as in the satisfaction of self-preservation (Vishnu) and in the pleasure of procreation (Brahma). This is

¹ [We easily recognise the two groups of sufferings that AS refers to in this sentence, but it's not clear why he says that one is the measure (*das Mass*) of the others.]

the inner significance of the *unity of Trimurti*,¹ which every human being is as a whole, though which of the three heads is raised varies from time to time.

As the individual thing relates to ideas, so suicide relates to denial of the will: someone who commits suicide denies merely the individual, not the species. We have already found that, because life is always certain for the will for life, and suffering is essential to this, suicide is an entirely vain and foolish action; it is the voluntary destruction of a single phenomenon, leaving the *thing in itself* undisturbed, as a rainbow endures however fast the exchange of the drops that are its momentary bearers. But in addition to this, suicide is the masterpiece of Maya, as the most screaming expression of the self-contradiction of the will for life. Just as we have recognised this contradiction in the lowest phenomena of will, in the constant battle for matter and time and space among all expressions of natural forces and all organic individuals (chapter 27), and as we saw with frightening clarity this conflict increasingly at work at the rising levels of objectification of will, so on the highest level, which is the idea of the human being, it finally reaches the degree where not only individuals displaying the same idea—i.e. belonging to the same species—engage in mutual extermination, but even the same individual declares war on himself, and the intensity with which he wills life and opposes the suffering that hinders it brings him to the point of destroying himself, so that by an act of will the individual will eliminates the body, which is just his own form of visibility, rather than allowing suffering to break the will. [AS continues this line of thought rather obscurely. His central point is that someone's suffering 'could lead him to self-denial and to redemption',

and that if he commits suicide he 'destroys the phenomenon of the will, the body, so that the will may remain unbroken'.]

That is why almost all ethical systems, philosophical and religious, condemn suicide, although they can give only weird sophistical reasons for doing so. But if anyone was ever held back from suicide by a purely moral impulse, the innermost sense of this self-overcoming (whatever concepts his reason may have clothed it in for him) was this: 'I do not wish to escape suffering, because submitting to it can contribute to nullifying that will for life whose phenomenon is so wretched, strengthening the knowledge of the world's real nature that is already dawning on me, so that it may finally become a quieter of my will and redeem me forever.'

It is well known that from time to time cases occur where the act of suicide extends to the children: the father kills the children, whom he greatly loves, and then himself. If we consider that conscience, religion, and all traditional notions lead him to recognise murder as the worst crime, yet he commits it in the hour of his own death and could have no egoistic motive for doing so, then the deed can only be explained this way: the will of the individual, ·the father·, immediately recognises itself in the children, though caught up in the delusion that takes the phenomenon for the essence in itself; and being deeply in the grip of knowledge of the misery of all life, he now intends to eliminate the essence itself along with the phenomenon, thus rescuing himself and the children. . . .from existence and its sorrow.

[AS now has a paragraph concerning the attempt to reproduce that suicide's line of thought to 'voluntary chastity'. He argues, a bit obscurely, that] this isn't possible by physical force such as destruction of the seed, or killing of the

¹ [The Trimurti are the trinity of supreme divinity in Hinduism, in which the cosmic functions of creation, maintenance, and destruction are personified.] (Wikipedia)]

newborn, or suicide. It is precisely nature that leads the will to the light, because it can only find its redemption in the light. Therefore, the purposes of nature are to be in every way promoted, once the will for life that is its inner essence has decided.

There seems to be one particular sort of suicide that is quite different from the ordinary sort, though its occurrence has perhaps not been sufficiently verified. It is voluntarily chosen starvation coming from the highest degree of asceticism; its phenomenon has always been accompanied by much religious fanaticism and even superstition, so that the reality of it—if it really has occurred—has been obscured. But it seems that *it has occurred*, that complete denial of the will can reach the level where even the will to take in the nourishment needed to maintain the body's vegetative life falls away. When someone dies in this way, his suicide doesn't arise from the will for life; rather, this utterly resigned ascetic has simply stopped living because he has totally stopped willing. [After an obscure addition to this, AS goes into details of individual cases that have been reported of suicide by starvation, where there is some evidence of their being of the will-denying kind of asceticism that is his topic here. He concludes:] The following item appears in a recent number of a Nuremberg newspaper:

'It is reported from Bern that in a thick forest near Thurnen a male corpse was discovered in a small hut; it had already been lying in a state of decomposition for about a month, in clothes that threw little light on the standing of their possessor. Two very fine shirts lay nearby. The most important item was a Bible interleaved with blank pages which had been partly written on by the deceased. He reports in them the day of his departure from home (but the place of his home is not named), then says that he has been

driven by the spirit of God into a wilderness to pray and to fast. He had already fasted for seven days on his journey to this place; then he ate again. Having settled in, he began to fast again. . . . Then every day is marked with a stroke; there are five of these, at the end of which the pilgrim presumably died. There was also found a letter to a pastor regarding a sermon that the deceased had heard him give; but here too the address was missing.'

Between these two sorts of voluntary death—•one arising from extreme asceticism, •the other, more usual, from desperation—there may be all sorts of intervening levels and combinations that are indeed hard to explain; but the human spirit has depths, darkneses, and convolutions whose illumination and unfolding is an extremely difficult task.

70. Freedom in the phenomenon. Contradictions

That concludes my account of what I call *denial of the will*. One might regard it as incompatible with the earlier discussion of the necessity that belongs to motivation just as much as to any other mode of the GP, so that motives—like all causes—are only occasioning causes. With motives the *person's* character unfolds its essence and reveals it with the necessity of a natural law, which is why back there I absolutely denied freedom as *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae* [see Glossary]. But far from suppressing that denial here, I call it to mind. In truth, real freedom, i.e. independence from the GP, belongs only to will as *thing in itself*, not to its phenomenon, whose essential form is everywhere the GP, the sphere *or home ground* of necessity. But there is one case—*only* one—where that freedom can become directly visible in the phenomenon; that's the case where freedom

puts an end to that which is making its appearance, and because

when this happens the mere phenomenon, a link in the chain of causes, the animate body, still continues in time, which contains only phenomena,

it follows that the will that manifests itself through this phenomenon now stands in contradiction with it, denying what the phenomenon expresses. In such a case the genitals, for example, as the visible aspect of the sex drive, exist and are healthy; but nonetheless, even in the innermost consciousness, no sexual satisfaction is willed; and the entire body is only the visible expression of the will for life, yet the motives corresponding to this will are no longer effectual. Indeed,

- the dissolution of the body,
- the end of the individual, and thereby
- the maximal impeding of the will in nature

is welcome and desired. Now, the contradiction between my assertion of •the necessity of the determination of the will by motives in accordance with the character and my assertion of •the possibility of the entire suppression of the will through which the motives become powerless is only the repetition in philosophy of this *real* contradiction that arises from the direct encroachment of the freedom of *the will-in-itself*, which knows no necessity, into the sphere of the necessity of its phenomenon. The key to reconciling these contradictions lies in the fact that the state in which one's character is removed from the power of motives comes not directly from the will but from an altered manner of knowledge. That is: as long as knowledge is only what is caught up in the individuation-maker, simply following the GP, the power of motives is indeed irresistible; but when

the individuation-maker is seen through; and ideas, indeed the essence of things in themselves, are directly

recognised as the same will in all of them, and from this recognition comes a general quieting of willing, then individual motives become ineffective, because the kind of knowledge corresponding to them has withdrawn, having been obscured by an entirely different one. So the character can of course never change in any of its **parts**, and must with the consistency of a natural law carry out the will of which it is as a **whole** the phenomenon; but this very **whole**, the person's character itself, can be totally cancelled by the switch in kinds of knowledge that I have described. This cancellation is what Asmus, as cited a few pages back, described as the 'catholic, transcendental change' and wondered at; it is also what the Christian church most fittingly calls *being born again*, calling the recognition that it comes from *the effect of grace*. Just because our topic is not alteration in someone's character but a complete cancellation of it, it follows that however different characters may have been before reaching that cancellation, after it they—i.e. the people whose characters they were—display a great similarity in their conduct, though they all *talk* very differently, according to their different concepts and dogmas,

On this understanding of it, therefore, the old philosophical doctrine of freedom of the will—constantly challenged and constantly maintained—is not groundless, nor is the church's dogma of *effect of grace* and *rebirth* without meaning and significance. But unexpectedly we now see the two of them come together into a unity, and can now understand the sense in which the excellent Malebranche could say *La liberté est un mystère* [French for 'freedom is a mystery'], and be right. For what the Christian mystics call 'effect of grace' and 'rebirth' is the single direct expression of *freedom of the will*. It first occurs when the will, having achieved knowledge of its essence in itself, is quieted by this and thereby removed from being affected by motives, which are in the domain

of a different kind of knowledge whose only objects are phenomena.

The possibility of freedom thus expressing itself is man's greatest prerogative. It is eternally lacking in animals, because it requires cool thinking by reason, which— independently of present impressions—allows for a survey of one's life as a whole. Animals lack all possibility of freedom, just as they lack all possibility of true—thus coolly thoughtful—decision-making on the basis of a previous thoroughgoing conflict among motives, which would involve abstract presentations, thus involving reason, which animals don't have. With the same necessity with which a stone falls to the earth, a hungry wolf sinks its teeth into the flesh of its prey, with no possibility of realising that it is the one that is torn apart as well the one that is doing the tearing. Necessity is the realm of nature; freedom is the realm of grace.

So we have seen that this self-cancellation of the will comes from knowledge, and all knowledge and insight are independent of choice; so it follows that this denial of willing, this occurrence of freedom, cannot be intentionally forced, but comes from the innermost relationship of knowing to willing in a person, thus coming suddenly, as if spontaneously, from without. That is precisely why the church called it 'a work of grace'. Just as it still had to depend on the reception of grace, so also the effect of the quieting is in the end an act of freedom on the part of the will. And because in consequence of such an effect of grace the whole nature of the person is fundamentally changed and reversed, so that he no longer wills anything that he previously willed intensely, something like a *new man* replaces the old one, which is why the church called this consequence of the effect of grace 'being born again'. For what it calls *the natural man*, to whom it denies all capacity for goodness, is just

the will for life, which must be denied if redemption is to be achieved from an existence such as ours. That is, behind our existence something else is hidden, which only becomes accessible to us by our shaking off the world.

It is with respect not to

- individuals, according to the GP, but to
- the idea of humanity in its unity,

that Christian theology symbolises *nature*, *affirmation of the will for life*, in **Adam**, whose sin as inherited by us—

i.e. our unity with him in the *idea*, which is represented in time by the bond of procreation

—makes all of us partakers of suffering and eternal death. And on the other hand it symbolises *grace*, *denial of the will*, *redemption* in **God become man**, who, as free from all sin, i.e. from all will for life,

cannot have come as we do from the most decisive affirmation of the will for life, or like us have a body that is through and through simply concrete will, phenomenon of will,

but rather, born of the pure virgin, has indeed only a phantom body. . . . This doctrine about Christ's body was particularly taught by Apelles, who with his followers was objected to by Tertullian. But even Augustine himself comments on Romans 8:3 ('. . . God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh') as follows: 'It was not indeed sinful flesh, not being born of carnal desire; but there was the likeness of flesh in it, because it was mortal flesh.' He also teaches in the work called *Opus imperfectum* that original sin is at once sin and punishment. It is present in newborn children, but first shows itself when they have grown. Nonetheless, this sin does not originate in the will of the sinner. This sinner was Adam, but we had all existed in him; misfortune befell Adam, and in him misfortune has befallen us all.

The doctrine of original sin (affirmation of the will) and

redemption (denial of the will) is actually the great truth that constitutes the core of Christianity, while the rest is mostly just clothing, husk, trappings. Accordingly, one should always take Jesus Christ in general terms, as the symbol or personification of denial of the will for life; not as an individual, whether according to his mythical history in the gospels or according to the plain history that that is presumably based on. For neither of those is likely to give complete satisfaction. It is merely the vehicle for its initial reception, for people who always demand something factual. —In recent times Christianity has forgotten its true meaning and degenerated into banal optimism, but that is of no concern to us here.

Furthermore, it is an original and evangelical doctrine of Christianity that Augustine—with the approval of the heads of the church—defended against the platitudes of the Pelagians, and that Luther made it the main goal of his efforts to purify of errors and re-establish, as he clearly declares in his book *On the bondage of the will*, namely the doctrine that

the *will is not free*, but is in its origin subject to the inclination to evil, so that its works are always sinful and imperfect and can never be enough for righteousness; therefore what make us blessed is not these works but faith alone; and this faith arises not from intention and free will but from *the work of grace* which, without our co-operation, comes to us **as though from outside**.

Along with the dogmas mentioned earlier, this genuinely evangelical dogma belongs with the ones that ignorant and trivial opinion nowadays rejects as absurd, or hides. The rationalism of today, despite Augustine and Luther, latches onto to vulgar Pelagianism, dismissing as antiquated the profound dogmas that are peculiar [see Glossary] to Christianity

in the narrowest sense, and and essential to it, while holding to and granting primary importance to dogma that has been derived and retained from Judaism alone, connected with Christianity ·not in theology or philosophy, but· only on the path of history.

But I recognise in the above-mentioned doctrine a truth that wholly agrees with the upshot of my own investigations. That is, I see ·in that Christian doctrine the thesis· that true virtue and holiness of disposition have their origin not in deliberate choice (works), but in knowledge (faith); which is exactly the conclusion I reached on the basis of my main thought. If salvation always came from works backed by motives and deliberate intentions, then virtue would always be—twist it how you will—a matter of shrewd, methodical, farseeing egoism.

But the **faith** for which the Christian church promises salvation is this: that just as

by the fall of the first man we all share in that sin and have become subject to death and perdition,

so too

we are all redeemed only through grace and the divine mediator's taking on himself our tremendous guilt,

which happens entirely without any personal merit on our part. For anything that can come from the person's intentional motive-determined conduct (**works**) can by its very nature never justify us. . . . This **faith** ·has two components; it is the belief· **(i)** that our state is originally and essentially a wretched one from which we need to be redeemed; and **(ii)** that we ourselves have evil in our nature, and are so tightly bound to it that our **works** in accordance with law and precepts—i.e. in accordance with motives—are never enough for righteousness and cannot redeem us. Rather, redemption can be won only through **faith**, i.e. through a change in one's mode of knowing, and this faith itself can

only come through grace, and so **as though from outside**. This means that salvation is something entirely foreign to our person, and points to a denial and surrender of this person as required for salvation. . . . Luther in his book *On Christian freedom* insists that once faith has appeared, good works follow from it automatically, as symptoms or fruits of it; not as laying claim to any merit, justification, or reward, but rather in a completely voluntary way and gratuitously.—So in my view also, free righteousness comes initially from ever more clearly seeing through the individuation-maker, with love then extending to the point of the utter elimination of egoism, and in the end resignation, or denial of the will.

I have brought in these dogmas of Christian theology, which in themselves have nothing to do with philosophy, only in order to show that the ethics yielded by my whole inquiry. . . .is in perfect agreement with Christian doctrines, properly so called, and was in its essentials contained in them and made available by them; just as it equally agrees with the doctrines and ethical precepts expounded. . . .in the sacred books of India. At the same time, recalling the dogmas of the Christian church served to clarify and elucidate the seeming contradiction between on the one hand **(i)** the necessity of all expressions of character when motives are presented (the ‘realm of nature’), and on the other **(ii)** the freedom of the *will in itself* to deny itself and to nullify one’s character along with all the motivational necessity that is grounded in it (the ‘realm of grace’).

71. Nothingness

As I bring to an end my treatment of the basics of ethics, and with it the whole development of that one thought which it has been my purpose to impart, I want not •to conceal an objection concerning this last part of the account but

rather •to show that it lies in the nature of the matter and can’t possibly be removed. The objection is this: once our considerations have finally brought us to the point where we—in complete saintliness—are contemplating denial and abandonment of all willing, and thus deliverance from a world whose entire existence has shown itself to be suffering, this now appears to us as a passage into empty *nothingness*.

[After a detour through Latin technicalities and Kantian terminology, AS arrives at the conclusion that any intelligible use of ‘nothing’ is *relative*, i.e. involves the thought *nothing of kind K* for some value of K. (The main point of the detour is to enable him to tack Kant’s Latin *nihil negativum* and *nihil privatum* onto expressions meaning ‘absolute nothing’ and ‘relative nothing’ respectively. The Latin phrases are omitted in this version.) He then continues:] No absolute nothing is so much as thinkable; anything of this sort—when considered from a higher standpoint or subsumed under a broader concept—is always in turn a relative nothing. Every nothing is such only in relation to something else, and presupposes this relation and thus also presupposes that something else. Even a logical contradiction is only a relative nothing. It is not something thought by reason, but that doesn’t make it a case of absolute nothing. For it is a verbal composition, it is an example of something unthinkable which is needed in demonstrating the laws of thought; so when it is employed for this purpose the arguer will keep focus on *nonsense* as the positive thing that he is just at the moment seeking, passing over *sense* as something negative. So every absolute nothing, when subordinated to some higher concept, will make its appearance as a mere relative nothing. . . . That which is generally assumed as positive—what we call *the existent* and whose negation the concept *nothing* in its most general meaning expresses—is precisely the world of presentation, which I have shown to be the objectivisation of will, its mirror.

We ourselves *are* this will and this world, and presentation in general belongs to them as one aspect of them. The form of this presentation is *space and time*, so from this standpoint everything that exists has to be somewhere and at some time. To presentation belong concepts (the material of philosophy) and words (the signs for concepts). Denial (suppression, conversion) of the will is also denial and suppression of the world, its mirror. No longer seeing the will in this mirror, we ask in vain where it has gone, and then lament that—since it no longer has any where or when—it has vanished into nothingness. . . .

If you insist on somehow acquiring a positive knowledge of that which philosophy can express only negatively as *denial of the will*, then I can only point to the state experienced by all who have achieved complete denial of the will—the state that is given the names ‘ecstasy’, ‘rapture’, ‘illumination’, ‘union with God’, and so on; but this state really shouldn’t be called knowledge, because it no longer has the form of subject and object—the knower and the known—and is, moreover, available only in one’s own experience and can’t be further communicated.

But we who consistently occupy the standpoint of philosophy must here be satisfied with knowledge of the negative sort, content to have arrived at the boundary-marker of the domain of the positive. Having recognised world’s *essence in itself* as will, and only its objectivisation in all of its phenomena, and having pursued the latter from the unconscious press of obscure natural forces up to the most fully conscious conduct of human beings, I don’t in the least shrink from the conclusion that with free denial—with abandonment of the will—all of those phenomena are nullified, that constant pressing and driving without goal and without rest, on all the levels of objectivisation in which and through which the world subsists; the multiplicity of forms in its

step-wise succession nullified; along with the will its entire phenomenon is nullified, and finally its general forms space and time, and even its fundamental subject/object form. No will: no presentation, no world.

Before us remains indeed only nothingness. But what resists this dissolution into nothingness, *our nature*, is just the will for life, which we ourselves *are*, just as it is our world. Our great abhorrence of nothingness is merely another expression of the fact that we will life so much, and are nothing but this will, and know nothing but it.

But if we turn our gaze away from our own neediness and uncertainty and toward those who have overcome the world, in whom the will, having achieved full self-knowledge, recognises itself in all things and then freely denies itself, and who then only wait to see the vanishing of its last trace, along with the body that it animates, then we are shown—

- instead of restless press and effort,
- instead of the constant passage from desire to fear and from joy to sorrow,
- instead of the undying and never satisfied hope that constitutes the life-dream of the man who wills,

—that peace which is higher than all reason, that perfect sea-calm of the spirit, that deep repose, unshakable confidence and cheerfulness whose mere reflection in a face (such as Raphael and Correggio have depicted it) is an entire and sure gospel: only knowledge has remained, the will has vanished. But we then look with deep and painful longing at this state, the contrast with which shines a full light on the sorrowful and wretched character of our own state. Yet this is the only consideration that can give us lasting consolation, when on the one hand,

we have recognised as essential to the phenomenon of will—to the world—incurable suffering and endless sorrow,

and on the other hand,

we see the world dissolve with nullification of the will,
leaving only empty nothingness before us.

And so in this way, by contemplating the life and conduct of
saints—

whom of course we seldom encounter in our own
experience, but who are brought before our eyes by
their written history and by art, attested with the
stamp of inner truth

—we must *banish* the dark impression of that nothingness,
which hovers as the ultimate goal behind all virtue and
saintliness and which we fear as children do the dark,
instead of *circumventing* it as do the Indians, through myths
and meaningless words such as ‘reabsorption in Brahma’ or
the ‘Nirvana’ of the Buddhists. Rather, we freely confess it:
after complete nullification of the will, what remains for all
those who are still full of will, is indeed nothingness. But
also conversely, for those in whom the will has turned and
denied itself, this our so very real world with all its suns and
galaxies is nothing.