The World as Weird:

Schopenhauer’s Use of Odd Phenomena to Corroborate His Metaphysics

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But the word will…is supposed to unlock the inner most essence of all things in nature for us like a magic spell” (WWR1 136/133).

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1We will cite Schopenhauer’s books using the following acronyms, the Arabic numerals before the slash referring to the page number of the books that have appeared in The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Schopenhauer and those after the slash referring to corresponding page numbers of Arthur Hübscher, Arthur, Schopenhauer: Sämtliche Werke, Wiesbaden: F.A. Brockhaus, 1988, 7 volumes.

For texts that have not appeared at this time in the Cambridge Edition, we will provide the translation and the page reference to the Hübscher edition of the Sämtliche Werke:

WWR1= The World as Will and Representation, volume 1, translated and edited by Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).


There are many delights in reading Arthur Schopenhauer’s philosophy besides the discovery of philosophic insights presented in his relatively clear and elegant prose. There are his many references to poetry, literature, world religions, philosophy, and the sciences, references which illuminate and provide depth to his thought. Then there are his citations of newspaper reports of odd events, his Tristram Shandyian meanderings, and his many explosive rants and even—in a schadenfreudlich sort of way—his sometimes brutal-but-delightful *ad hominems*. Then again there are his colorful examples: the bisected bulldog ant of Australia biting its tail as the tail stings its head, which shows the self-rupture of will (WWR1 172/175f); the Javanese squirrel hurling itself into the jaws of a ribbon snake, as the squirrel’s young lie in its nest, which supports pessimism (WWR2 356); and the decomposed corpse found in a cabin the forest near Thurnen, which connotes death by voluntary starvation and asceticism (WWR1 429/475). Then, too, there are those types of discussions that give one pause, such as the one found in the oddest and lengthiest footnote to the oddest and lengthiest chapter in *On Will in Nature*, “Animal Magnetism and Magic,” in which Schopenhauer recalls his experience of a magician:

In the year 1854, I had the good fortune to see here [Frankfurt] such extraordinary feats of Mr. Regazzoni of Bergamo, in which the immediate, that is, magical, power of his will over others is unmistakable and to the greatest degree astonishing, of the authenticity of which feats none could remain in doubt, except those to whom nature has completely denied all capacity for comprehending pathological conditions; however, there are such subjects, who must be made lawyers, ministers, merchants, or soldiers, but for heaven’s sake not doctors, for the result would be fatal, since in medicine diagnosis is the primary thing. — [Regazzoni] could put his somnambulist, who was under his influence, into complete catalepsy; in fact, merely through his will, without gestures, as she walked
forward and he stood behind her, he could make her fall backwards. He could paralyze her, put her in a state of tetanus [Starrkrampf], with dilated pupils, completely insensible, and the unmistakable signs of a completely cataleptic condition. He had a lady from the audience play the piano, and then standing 15 paces behind her, through his will, with gestures, paralyzed her so she could not play. Then he put her against a column and charmed her so that she could not move from the spot despite the greatest effort.—

According to my observation almost all of his tricks can be explained from the fact that he isolates the brain from the spinal column, either completely, whereby all sensible and motor nerves are paralyzed and complete catalepsy occurs, or the paralysis affects only the motor nerves, while sensibility remains, so that her head retains consciousness atop a body apparently dead. Strychnine works in just the same way: it paralyzes only the motor nerves to the point of complete tetanus, leading to death by suffocation; yet it leaves the sensible nerves, hence also the consciousness, undisturbed. Regazzoni does the same through the magical influence of his will. (WN 408/102)

One could blush at Schopenhauer’s credulity, but in many ways the entire chapter is incredible. Indeed, his fascination with paranormal and occult phenomena makes it easy to sympathize with Nietzsche’s observation concerning the “vices and excesses” of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, such as “the nonsense about compassion, about how it makes possible the penetration of the principium individuationis, how it is the basis of all morality; also such claims as ‘dying is the purpose of existence,’ and ‘a priori one cannot altogether deny the possibility that magical effects might emanate from one who has died’.”

Nietzsche also questions Schopenhauer’s

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2 Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft, [The Gay Science], section 99, “Schopenhauer’s Followers.” The first passage that Nietzsche places in quotation marks, “das Sterben ist eigentlich der Zweck des
ability to get to the bottom of moral phenomena by mentioning that Schopenhauer is “one who still honestly believes in illuminations from above, in magic, in ghostly appearances and in the metaphysical ugliness of the toad!”

In contrast to Nietzsche’s sensibilities, accepting the reality of paranormal phenomena did not strike Schopenhauer as odd. Reflecting on his own commitment to idealism, to his thinking that we carry the world around in our heads, Schopenhauer observes that his idealism “surpasses in incredibility of all the fairytales and fables ever invented,” something that led him to feel “like Arjuna when Krishna appeared to him in his true divine form with his hundred thousand arms, eyes, mouths, etc.” Moreover, Schopenhauer had experienced animal magnetism and ghosts; he also had a sense of being mildly clairvoyant. But more importantly, such phenomena had lengthy multi-cultural histories that, for Schopenhauer, gave them credence. Indeed, in his “Essay on Spirit-Seeing and Everything Connected with It,” for the first volume of Parerga and Paralipomena, Schopenhauer does not provide accounts of spirit-seeing, assuming that his readers were well familiar with such accounts, and he took such experiences as Daseins,” appears to be a paraphrase of WWR2 732, where Schopenhauer writes, “Das Sterben ist allerdings als der eigentliche Zweck des Lebens anzusehen.” The second quoted material is from PP1, 324.

3Friedrich Nietzsche, Morgenröte. Gedanken über die moralischen Vorurteile [Daybreak: Thoughts on Moral Prejudices], Section 142. In one of his later manuscripts, Schopenhauer observed: “the fearful aversion, which many people have for toads and which must rest not on a physical or an aesthetic, but on a metaphysical basis. In this connection, we have still to reflect that from time immemorial toads have been used for the arts of magic,” The Manuscript Books of 1830-1852 and Last Manuscripts, 384 (Volume 4 of Arthur Schopenhauer: Manuscript Remains in Four Volumes, trans. E.F.J. Payne, Oxford: Berg, 1988-1990).

4Schopenhauer, Manuscript Remains, Vol. 4, 45/Der handschriftliche Nachlaß, Vol. 4, 1, 32.

a fact for which he would provide a theory. It is also significant to note that Schopenhauer was hardly alone in accepting the reality of paranormal phenomena. One can think of the solid British utilitarian, Henry Sidgwick, the first president of the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882 (London), and the North American pragmatist, William James, the first president of the British Society’s counterpart, the American Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1884 (Boston).

Moreover, for a philosopher who had the drive to get to the bottom of things, whose curiosity was unrestrained, and who possessed both an unbridled openness and the courage to philosophically explore taboo subjects, it is not surprising that he would philosophize on the abnormal and the paranormal, on such phenomena as animal magnetism, clairvoyance, telepathy, ghosts, telekinesis, and magic. Yet his consideration of such odd, fringe, and paranormal phenomena was more than simple musings and Shandyian meanderings. While philosophers generally neglected such phenomena, Schopenhauer took pride in the fact that he considered them, and he told his friend Julius Frauenstädt that “[his] metaphysics had vindicated” these neglected phenomena. Yet Schopenhauer also appealed to these phenomena to corroborate his metaphysics. In what way did these phenomena corroborate his metaphysics?

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6 Psychologist Terence Hines observes “Many theories have been proposed by parapsychologists to explain how psi [psychic phenomena] takes place. To skeptics, such theory building seems premature, as the phenomena to be explained by the theories have yet to be demonstrated convincingly”; see his *Pseudoscience and the Paranormal* (New York: Prometheus, 2003), 146

7 See, for example, Wolfframm, Heather *The Stepchildren of Science: Psychical Research and Parapsychology in Germany*, (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2009), 46-48. For a thorough account of Schopenhauer’s work on occult phenomena in the context of the second half of the nineteenth century, see Segala, Marco, *I fantasmi, il cervello, l’anima Schopenhauer, l’occulto e la scienza* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1998).

8 Both societies still exist.

9 *Arthur Schopenhauer: Gespräche*, ed. Arthur Hübscher (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt; Friedrich Frommann Verlag Günther Holzboog, 1971), 127. Schopenhauer was referring specifically to his work on the metaphysics of sexual love and spirit-seeing (*Geistersehn*), both of which he recognizes as including claims that transcend the bounds of all possible experience.
Do they, in some sense, actually corroborate his metaphysics? To answer these questions it is necessary to consider his meta-metaphysics.

**An immanent metaphysics:**

**Between dogmatic omniscience and the despair of the Kantian critique**

It is not surprising that Schopenhauer would be silent about metaphysics in his first book, his dissertation, since *On the Fourfold Root* is a work in what he would call later call “*philosophia prima,*” an analysis of the “faculty of cognition [Erkenntnistätigkeit],” its forms, laws, validity, and limitations (PP2 §21).\(^\text{10}\) Even in its extensively revised second edition, where there is more metaphysical content, he says nothing about the nature of metaphysics, although, to show his allegiance to Kant, he assiduously replaced the term “metaphysical” with “transcendental.” Nor is it unexpected that he would be silent about metaphysics in his second work, *On Vision and Colors,* given his task of developing a theory of colors, a task he viewed as primarily scientific. It is surprising, however, that Schopenhauer says little about the nature of metaphysics in the first edition of his main work, and when he does describe the task of metaphysics, he does so obliquely in the context of a discussion of the metaphysically expressive power of music.

Paraphrasing Leibniz, Schopenhauer describes music as “an unconscious exercise in metaphysics, in which the mind does not know it is philosophizing,” and he says that “philosophy is nothing other than a complete and correct repetition and expression of the essence of the world in very general concepts,” (WWR1 292/312)\(^\text{11}\) He contends that music produces in

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\(^\text{10}\)PP1 and PP2 refer to the first and second volumes of *Parerga und Paralipomena* respectively. These are cited and translated by the authors from volumes 5 and 6, respectively of Hübscher’s, *Arthur Schopenhauer: Sämtliche Werke.* Page numbers refer to the *Sämtliche Werke.*

\(^\text{11}\)It is not uncommon for Schopenhauer to use the terms “philosophy” and “metaphysics” interchangeably. For example, in PP2 18, Schopenhauer writes: “It is true that philosophy has as
tones what metaphysics does through concepts. In the first edition of *World as Will and Representation*, the task of metaphysics appears to be to conceptually express the essence of the world, which he does by denimating this essence “will.” In his fourth book, *On Will in Nature*, Schopenhauer remarks that after “a seventeen-year silence,” he is publishing again to provide some of the corroboration that my philosophy has received from unbiased empiricists who, unacquainted with my philosophy, have, at the end point of their method aimed at mere knowledge from experience, discovered just that which my theory has presented as metaphysics by which experience in general is to be explained. (WN 323/1)

Yet he still neither explains nor attempts to justify this novel idea of metaphysics.

Only in the second edition of *World as Will and Representation* does Schopenhauer first discuss the idea that metaphysics explains “experience in general.” He addresses his metaphysics first in the Appendix to the first volume, “Critique of the Kantian Philosophy,” and he elaborates on this conception of metaphysics in the important 17th chapter of the second volume of his main work, “On the Metaphysical Need of the Human.” Later he casts more light on metaphysics in section 21 of “On Philosophy and Its Method,” from the second volume of *Parerga and Paralipomena*.

In the “Critique of the Kantian Philosophy,” Schopenhauer confronts Kant’s rejection of “dogmatic metaphysics” the view that we can have knowledge of that which lies beyond the

its object experience; however, not like the other sciences this or that specific experience, but rather experience itself, generally and as such, according to its possibility, its scope [Gebiete], its essential content, its inner and outer elements, its form and matter.” Later, in the same section, he write about “metaphysics in the narrower sense,” as proceeding from appearances to “that which appears, to that which is behind appearances, thus τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά,” thereby returning to a somewhat Aristolean view of metaphysics.
possibility of experience.” Schopenhauer understands Kant to be arguing something like the following:

(1) Metaphysics is the science that seeks cognition of what lies beyond the possibility of experience (things in themselves).

(2) Our cognitions of things are either *a priori* or *a posteriori*.

(3) But what is cognized *a priori* is found in human reason and applies only to our representations (experiences of things) and do not concern the existence of things beyond our experiences (things in themselves).

(4) Therefore, metaphysics can never be based on *a priori* cognitions. (1, 3)

(5) Therefore, metaphysics must be based on *a posteriori* cognitions. (2, 4)

(6) Yet what lies beyond the possibility of experience can never be discovered *a posteriori*, using principles that are derived from inner or outer experience.

(7) Therefore, metaphysics cannot be based on *a posteriori* cognitions. (1, 6)

(8) Therefore we cannot have cognitions what lies beyond the possibility of experience (things in themselves). (2, 4, 7)

(9) Therefore, metaphysics is impossible.12 (1, 8)

While Schopenhauer is willing to accept the argument that metaphysics cannot be based on the *a priori* forms of cognition, he rejects Kant’s claims (6) ‘What lies beyond the possibility of experience can never be discovered *a posteriori*, using principles that are derived from inner or outer experience’; (7), ‘Metaphysics cannot be based on *a posteriori* cognitions’, and (9) ‘Metaphysics is impossible.’ Schopenhauer argues that (7), ‘Therefore, metaphysics cannot be based on *a posteriori* cognitions,’ begs the question, and that Kant had simply provided an
“etymological argument” for this claim in the first section of the Prolegomena by holding that “metaphysics was identical to a priori cognition” (WWR1 454/506). It becomes Schopenhauer’s burden to show why (6) ‘Yet what lies beyond the possibility of experience can never be discovered a posteriori, using principles that are derived from inner or outer experience,’ and (7) ‘Metaphysics cannot be based on a posteriori cognitions,’ are false.

To prepare his argument Schopenhauer claims that “the world and our existence are necessarily given to us as a riddle” (WWR1 454/506), implying that the task of metaphysics is to solve the riddle of existence. At this point he does not say what this riddle is, assuming that his reader recalls an earlier, somewhat oblique discussion in the second book of World as Will and Representation, where he raised the question of the meaning (Bedeutung) of representations, that is, whether the world is nothing more than representation and is, therefore, something akin to an “insubstantial dream or ghostly phantasm” (WWR1 123/118). He then claims that “the subject of cognition, appearing as an individual, is given the solution to this riddle: and this solution is will” (WWR1 124/119). Schopenhauer continues in the “Critique of the Kantian Philosophy” to claim that the solution to the riddle of the world must come from the world, that it is accomplished by connecting outer to inner experiences in the correct way, that this solution to the riddle does not solve all philosophic problems, and that the path to solving the riddle of existence lies between the earlier omniscience of dogmatic metaphysics and the despair of the Kantian critique.

To help his readers better understand his view of metaphysics, Schopenhauer refers them to the 17th chapter of the second volume of World as Will and Representation, “On the

12 See WWR1 453-54/505-06.
Metaphysical Need of the Human,” where he provides his most robust discussion of
metaphysics. Here, however, he radically redefines metaphysics. It is no longer a science that
attempts to know that which lies beyond the bounds of all possible experience; rather,
metaphysics is “the science of experience in general…the correct explanation of experience as a
whole” (WWR2 201). Arguing that “the whole of experience is like a cryptograph
[Geheimschrift], and philosophy is the deciphering of it [Entzifferung], the correctness of which
is confirmed by the connectedness that appears everywhere” (WWR2 202f), 13 Schopenhauer
holds that experience is deciphered “if only this whole [of experience] is grasped in sufficient
depth, and inner experience is connected to outer, then must it be capable of being interpreted
[gedeutet], explained [ausgelegt], from itself” (WWR2 203). The verification that experience
has been grasped in sufficient depth is when “It [the deciphering] must spread a uniform light
over all appearances of the world, and even bring the most heterogeneous into agreement, so that
the contradiction is resolved also between those that contrast the most” (WWR2 205). 14

Schopenhauer, of course, has to show why Kant’s claims are false: that (6) ‘What lies
beyond the possibility of experience can never be discovered a posteriori, using principles
themselves that are derived from inner or outer experience’; and that (7) ‘Metaphysics cannot be
based on a posteriori cognitions.’ And he has to explain how metaphysics, as a science drawn

13 At WWR 201 Schopenhauer refers his to the chapter “Physical Astronomy,” from On Will in
Nature, where he claims to have used inner experience as the key for connecting inner and out
experiences; see WN 394-400/84-94.
14 D. W. Hamlyn views Schopenhauer as employing an “argument to the best explanation” in
favor of his metaphysics; i.e., his metaphysics of will yields the best explanation of experience as
a whole. See Hamlyn’s “Why are There Phenomena?” in Zeit der Ernte: Studien zum Stand der
Schopenhauer-Forschung, Festschrift für Arthur Hübscher zum 85. Geburtstag, Ed. Wolfgang
Schirmacher (Stuttgart/Bad Cannstadt: Frommann/Holzboog, 1982), 343.
from experience, can be said to move beyond experience. Schopenhauer mounts a curious argument against (6) and (7), using a series of rhetorical questions:

But does it not appear downright backwards that one looks away from experience, ignoring its content [Inhalt], and that one should simply take and use as material [Stoff] empty forms [Formen] of which we are a priori conscious, in order to unriddle [enträthseln] experience, i.e., the world which alone lies before us? Is it not rather appropriate for the subject that the science of experience in general, and as such, would just draw from experience? Its problem is given to it empirically; why should its solution also not be aided by experience? The task is certainly not the observation of particular experiences, but rather the correct explanation of experience as a whole. Therefore its foundation must certainly be of an empirical kind. (WWR2 200f)

Schopenhauer appears to reject both (6) and (7) by simply redefining the nature of metaphysics. If metaphysics is the science of experience in general, then it follows that a posteriori and not simply a priori (non-empirical) cognitions would be the material for metaphysics. Indeed, if metaphysics aims at a comprehensive explanation of experience, it would seem absurd to ignore experience, and it would make sense that there has to be an empirical foundation for metaphysics.15

Schopenhauer claims that Metaphysics “is knowledge [Wissen] drawn from the intuition of the external actual world and from the information about this by the most intimate facts of self-consciousness deposited in direct concepts (WWR2 204). But if metaphysics has an

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15 By making metaphysics an empirical endeavor, Schopenhauer is well aware that he surrenders any claims regarding certainty; see WWR2 201.
empirical foundation, if it must draw its materials from Locke’s two fountains of experience, sensation and reflection, or from Kant’s outer and inner senses, how can metaphysics justify claims concerning that which lies beyond experience? How can Schopenhauer view will as thing in itself? He again appeals to Kant: “And although no one can cognize the thing in itself through the veil [Hülle] of the forms of intuition, nonetheless everyone carries this within himself, indeed, is it himself [so trägt anderseits doch Jeder dieses in sich, ja, ist es selbst]; therefore, it must be in some way accessible in self-consciousness, if only in a conditional way. Thus the bridge on which metaphysics goes beyond experience is nothing other than that very separation of experience into appearance and thing in itself, that in which I have placed Kant’s greatest merit” (WWR2 203). By retaining an allegiance to Kant’s transcendental idealism, Schopenhauer accepts that the world of experience, the object of the “outer sense,” is mere appearance and that a priori knowledge is valid only in reference to experience. Now, however, without argumentation, he puts another twist on Kant:

I added [to Kant] that, precisely as appearance, it is the manifestation of that which appears; and with him [Kant], I call that which appears the thing in itself. Therefore the thing in itself must express its inner nature and character in the world of experience, and it must be possible to interpret these from it, and indeed from the material, not from the mere form, of experience. Accordingly philosophy is nothing but the correct and universal understanding of experience itself, the true interpretation of its meaning and content. This is the metaphysical, i.e., that which is merely clothed in appearance and veiled [Verhüllte] in its forms, that which is related to appearance as the thought or idea is to the word. (WWR2 204)
Employing Kant’s distinction between appearance and thing in itself as permitting his claim that the thing in itself is that which appears in all appearances, Schopenhauer ties will as thing in itself to appearance, such that it is known only in reference to appearances and that it is not to be considered “as an ens extramundanum, but it is always cognized only in its relations [Verhältnissen] and references [Beziehungen] to appearance itself.” (WWR2 203)

As is the case with any experience, Schopenhauer contends, the experience of our will is within the most basic epistemic condition, the subject/object correlation, and that as an object of self-consciousness, the will has a “being-in-itself” different from our experience of it as an object. Moreover since the will is an object of self-consciousness (the inner sense), the will is cognized through the a priori form of time, and so it is experienced in “successive individual acts, not as a whole in and by itself” (WWR2 220). For these reasons, Schopenhauer concluded that we do not know the thing-in-itself “naked,” but that the will is that in which the thing-in-itself has “to a great extent cast off its veils” (WWR2 220).16 Because the will is still “veiled” and our forms of cognition apply to appearances, no final solution to the riddle of existence is possible, since such a solution would entail that we peek hind the veil, something that would be a new form of cognition, something akin to Schelling’s intellectual intuition, which Schopenhauer mocked as the so-called sixth sense of the bat.17 Human cognitive capacity is such that

16 In reference to Schopenhauer’s claim that the inner experience of will is an experience of the thing-in-itself “under the lightest of veils,” Sebastian Schmidt raised the obvious question: “Was ist überhaupt ein halb verschleiertes Ding an sich? Schwerlich wird man sich hierunter etwas denken können” [Whatever is a partially veiled thing in itself? It will be difficult to be able to think of anything by this concept]. See Schmidt’s Schopenhauer’s Willensmetaphysik in ihrem Verhältnis zu neueren Ansichten über den Willen (Leipzig: 1894) 12.

17 Schopenhauer decries the Post-Kantian philosophers, Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel for trying to fashion out of Kant’s notion of theoretical reason some oracle with a privileged access to the supersensible; see FR 116/123 and WWR1 551/618.
concerning the thing in itself, concerning the “naked” thing in itself, it would be impossible for us to derive any sense. Even “if a being of a higher type came and took all the trouble to teach it to us, we would be thoroughly unable to understand his disclosures” (WWR2 206).\(^{18}\)

The will qualifies as thing-in-itself compared to other appearances because it has only the “veil” of time and it is the content, stuff, kernel, or essence of the more complexly-conditioned appearances. As Schopenhauer claimed in *On Will in Nature*, the will is the “in-itself” of all representations: “Everything that is known of things only empirically, only *a posteriori*, is in itself will; in contrast, as far as things are determinable *a priori*, they belong solely to representation, to the mere appearance” (WN 393/86). Hence the will is expressed in appearance: it is that which is “represented” in “representations” (PPI 21), that which is expressed in all representations which are spatially and temporarily ordered within a causal matrix like the representation of one’s own body. Yet since the experience of will as thing in itself is conditioned by human cognition: what the thing in itself *is* in itself is unknown. For this reason, Schopenhauer’s metaphysics, which seeks to explain the totality of experiences, is a theory of *almost* everything, recognizing the possibility of something eluding theorizing.

*Empirical corroborations of the metaphysics of will*

In *On Will in Nature* Schopenhauer views the corroborations of his philosophy by the sciences as concerning “the core and principal point of my theory, its metaphysics proper...,that with which

\[^{18}\text{For an account of the development of Schopenhauer’s view of will as thing in itself in the second edition of World as Will and Representation, see Cartwright, David E, “Two Senses of}\]
we are immediately acquainted and precisely intimate, that which we find in our innermost selves as *will*, [is] the only thing in itself, the only truly real thing, the only original and metaphysical thing in the world where everything else is only appearance, i.e., mere representation.” “Will,” he continues, “gives power to everything, whatever it may be, the power by means of which it can exist and give effect” (WN 324/2). Following a remark in one of Kant’s pre-critical essays concerning the relationship of metaphysics to science, Schopenhauer claims that his metaphysics of will grounds science by explaining those basic elements at which the sciences end or are presupposed as givens, e.g., as natural forces, vital forces, and formative drives. Schopenhauer sees the natural sciences as corroborating his metaphysics, however, by recognizing will at the endpoints of their investigations, “when in particularly fortunate cases especially clear sighted and observant investigators in the realm of the natural sciences succeed at casting a stolen glance beyond the curtain that, as it were, fixes the limits of their science, not just sensing the boundary as such, but also in a way perceiving even its constitution [Beschaffenheit], and in a way even peering into the realm of metaphysics that lies on the other side of the curtain” (WN 326/4). Consequently, in the first four chapters of *On Will in Nature*, Schopenhauer works his way through the natural sciences, showing cases in which the will was recognized as basic. This strategy is continued in the fifth chapter, “Linguistics,” where he highlights languages that attribute a will to natural processes. The sixth chapter, “Animal

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19 Schopenhauer quotes from one of Kant’s pre-critical works, his first book, the 1746 *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte* [*Thoughts on the True Estimation of the Vital Forces*], §51 “It is apparent that the original sources of the effects of nature must absolutely be the subject of metaphysics” (WN 325/5).

Magnetism and Magic,” continues the same method, citing instances in which practitioners of animal magnetism and magic credit a will as that which is the force behind their arts.

Yet there is something deeper at stake for Schopenhauer when he considers paranormal phenomena: in such phenomena as animal magnetism,\(^{21}\) clairvoyance, telepathy, extra-sensory perception, ghosts, telekinesis, and magic, Schopenhauer believed that:

we will see will—which I have presented as the thing in itself, as the only real thing in all existence, as the core of nature—achieving through the human individual things not to be explained by causal connection, i.e., by the law of the course of nature, indeed, things that to a certain extent suspend this law and actually exert action at a distance, thus revealing a supernatural, i.e., metaphysical mastery of nature —then I know of no more factual corroboration of my theory that could still be required. (WN 409/104)

Consequently paranormal phenomena serve as “factual corroboration” of his metaphysics in ways no other phenomena can because such phenomena elude scientific explanation and, from the point of view of the natural sciences, would have to be regarded as delusions, illusions, tricks, or frauds, because they contradicted the laws of nature. So when the good Signor Regazzoni, whom Schopenhauer discusses in that oddest and longest footnote, exerted the

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\(^{21}\)Wolfframm describes “Mesmerism” or “animal magnetism” as “a system of therapeutics based on the idea that ill health is a result of imbalances of magnetic fluids within the body, which a mesmerist can redistribute by means of magnetic strokes. In some patients the application of Mesmerism leads to a state of somnambulism.” She defines “somnambulism,” as “a state of sleep, or half-waking trace, spontaneously or artificially induced—i.e., through Mesmerism or hypnosis—in which complex intellectual tasks can be carried out and in which paranormal abilities such as clairvoyance and telepathy are sometimes exhibited,” (The Stepchildren of Science, 5-6). When visited patients of a well-known animal magnetist, Karl Wolfart, Schopenhauer even managed to induce a state of somnambulism in a woman simply by looking at her; see Cartwright, Schopenhauer: A Biography, 442-443.
magical powers of his will on his assistant, making her tumble, paralyzing her, and putting her into a cataleptic state, and when Regazzoni paralyzed the volunteer from the audience, simply through gestures, thereby preventing her from playing the piano, he breached the separation between individuals, broke the bounds between distinct spatial-temporal individuals, defying all causal laws. He defied the physical connections between things, the so-called “physical nexus,” and he demonstrated that:

there must be still another [connection], proceeding through the essence in itself of all things, a subterranean connection, so to speak, whereby one point of appearance would be able immediately to affect any other by a metaphysical nexus; that therefore it must be possible to affect things from within, instead of from without as is usual, an effect of appearance on appearance, by means of the essence in itself that is one and the same in all appearances; that, just as we act causally as created nature, we would also be capable of acting as creating nature, and for the moment the microcosm would assert itself as macrocosm; that the partitions of individuation and separation, no matter how firm, could still occasionally permit a communication, as it were, behind the curtains, or like a secret game under that table. (WN 415/111)

The will, of course, provides this metaphysic connection.22

22 Schopenhauer also drew a connection between compassion, animal magnetism and magic, classifying them, along with sexual love, as forms of “Sympathy [Sympathie],” that is, of forms of “The empirical emerging of the metaphysical identity of the will through the physical multiplicity of the will’s appearance” (WWR2 692). In this regard he referred to animal magnetism, magic, and compassion as “practical metaphysics,” as expressions of what (theoretical) metaphysics describes; see WN 408/102 and The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics, trans. Christopher Janaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 245/260,
It is clear why Schopenhauer would find paranormal phenomena significant for his metaphysics. If there were such phenomena, Schopenhauer’s philosophy would appear to have more explanatory power than the natural sciences, since he could claim that his philosophy explains a greater range of experience than the sciences. More profoundly, however, Schopenhauer claims that the confirmation of a correct deciphering of experience is that it “must spread a uniform light over all appearances of the world, and even bring the most heterogeneous into agreement, so that the contradiction may be removed also between those that contrast the most” (WWR2 205). Paranormal phenomena provide a profound contradiction to normal phenomena, and by having a metaphysics that can account for paranormal phenomena, Schopenhauer finds that his metaphysics explains the totality of experiences.

Yet it is doubtful that paranormal phenomena are as Schopenhauer viewed them, phenomena that elude scientific explanation. Take our old friend Signor Regazzoni who, through the magical influences of his will, was able to isolate the frustrated pianist’s brain from her spinal column, so that her head retained consciousness atop an apparently dead body. It appears that Schopenhauer is guilty here of employing the concept of causality transcendentally, since one wonders how the idea of magical influence is not some causal notion, suggesting that the magnetizer has tapped into the metaphysical nexus in such a way so as to work his individual will on another. (It seems, however, that the good Signor’s metaphysical connection was tenuous. When two Frankfurt physicians visited him in his apartment a short time after his where compassion is analyzed as the Urphänomen of ethics and receives a tentative metaphysical explanation.
astonishing performance, they found him incapable of duplicating the feats exhibited in his stage act. Of course, there could have been a metaphysical disconnect.)

When it came to ghosts, however, Schopenhauer was more cautious. He thought that his metaphysics could ground animal magnetism, clairvoyance, telepathy, and magic, but ghosts metaphysically troubled him. Consequently, he ended his essay on spirit-seeing by claiming that his philosophy only cast “a dim light” (PP1 328) on the phenomenon; one insufficient to illuminate the phenomenon in a way that would resolve the millennia-long debate between believers and skeptics. He even suggested that a living person might have vivid reminiscences of a person and interpret these as communications from the dead. In any case, he held that, unlike other paranormal phenomena, which were inter-subjective and comparable to our intuitions of object of the outer sense, he concludes his essay by claiming that “spirit-seeing is primarily and immediately nothing further than a vision in the brain of the spirit seer” (PP1 328). While he believed that a living or dying person could affect such a vision, he left it an open question whether a dead person could affect such a vision. He did so with good reason. Whereas his explanation of clairvoyance appealed to a metaphysical connection provided by the will, a connection that at some representational level united all existence and was present in everything that was, is, or will be, Schopenhauer was at a loss to use the same explanation for ghosts. Clairvoyants thought through another’s brain as their own brain “slept,” but the problem is that the dead have no intellect, and thus no brain—indeed, nothing “physical” to direct will. More

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deeply, death annihilated anything that would individualize one dead person from another—each and everything at the level of will is just will.\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{Conclusion}

Schopenhauer’s focus on the paranormal provides him with a set of phenomena that contradict the standpoint of the natural sciences, and by showing how his metaphysics can account for these phenomena, Schopenhauer has more evidence to support his claim that his metaphysics explains the totality of experiences. Although Schopenhauer’s positing of a non-spatial and non-temporal nexus provided by will seems as if it can explain phenomena that violate the laws of space and time, his claim that the agency of the magician, magnetist, and clairvoyant functions to produce these phenomena is parasitic on some notion of causality functioning through subterranean channels, channels outside the domain in which the concept of causality applies. Indeed, it involves the transcendent employment of the principle of sufficient reason of becoming; its use being beyond the bounds of possible experience. Moreover will as an object for the inner sense is still a temporal object for a subject and as such seems incapable of accounting for things seemingly non-temporal. Indeed, the idea of some metaphysical connection, some \textit{nexus} uniting all representations, appears also to involve the idea of space.\textsuperscript{25} Consequently since

\textsuperscript{24}Schopenhauer holds that “Individuality is also inherent in will, insofar as the character is individual; however, this [character] is annihilated \textit{[aufgehoben]} in the denial of will. Thus individuality is inherent in will only in its affirmation and not in its denial.” (WWR2 700) Perhaps ghosts are the dead who did not deny will (no wonder that they are troubled!). Ultimately, how deeply the roots of individuality go in the being itself in the world is a question that Schopenhauer holds cannot be answered, since it entails an answer that is transcendent; see WWR2 736-37.

\textsuperscript{25}Schopenhauer might have defended himself here as he did when confronted with similar problems. For example, when questioned by his friend Johann Becker about how the intelligible character could constitute an extra-temporal act of will, and how a person’s empirical character
Schopenhauer attempts to develop a metaphysics that mediates between the omniscience of dogmatic metaphysics and the despair of the Kantian critique by saying something about the thing in itself (will is a veiled thing in itself) and by recognizing the limits of human cognition (things in themselves are beyond cognition), he is led to walk a fine line between the immanent and the transcendent, a line he cannot help but cross in his analysis of weird phenomena. Indeed at best Schopenhauer can only claim that will is the essence of appearances. Moreover Schopenhauer seems to make will the *Urphänomen* of his philosophy, since will is the basis for explaining all other experiences and it is inexplicable and irreducible to something more basic. Perhaps that should be philosophically sufficient. Certainly one can admire Schopenhauer’s willingness to explore phenomena that have been generally ignored by philosophers, but at the same time, one must question his willingness to uncritically accept paranormal phenomena at face value. Certainly if there was one thing that Schopenhauer was not, he was not a skeptic. This lack of skepticism sometimes serves him well, such as his pragmatic rejection of theoretical egoism (solipsism). But with the paranormal it appears to have failed him. Perhaps he should have just left the paranormal as the subject for parapsychologists and ghost hunters, waiting instead for “facts” for which he could then attempt to supply a theory.\(^{26}\)

could be its appearance, Schopenhauer replied, “I present this not as an objective truth or as an adequate notion of the relation between the thing in itself and appearance; rather, I present it merely as a metaphor and simile, as a figurative expression of the matter...in order to make the matter comprehensible” see *Arthur Schopenhauer: Gesammelte Briefe*, 217, Schopenhauer to Becker, 21 September 1844. In “Schopenhauer’s Naturphilosopie metaphorisch gelesen,” *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*, 93 (2012), Giuseppe Invernizzi argues that when Schopenhauer attributions some property to the thing in itself, it should be understood metaphorically.\(^{26}\) Gottlieb Florschütz argues that Schopenhauer’s account of extrasensory perception as an emanation from a metaphysical will established a philosophical foundation for modern parapsychology long before parapsychology was established as a “science”; see his