Schopenhauer and Leopardi

by Francesco De Sanctis

Dialogue between A. and D.

D. All the way to Zurich?

A. What can I say? One travels to get ideas.

D. Looks like by now you have your pockets full of them.

A. You mean these notebooks? Here's one that's still blank; you can help me fill it in. What are all these books?

D. Arthur Schopenhauer.

A. Who would that be?

D. The philosopher of the future. In Germany, there are the great men of the present and the great ones of the future, the misunderstood ones. Schopenhauer is one of those.

A. Never heard the name.

D. Your grandchildren will. The truth limps along, but it gets there eventually.

A. And you study all this stuff?

D. For the past three months, my dear man. I've promised an article to the *Contemporary Review*.

A. Three months for one article? You're too simple. The more you study an author, the foggier he gets. At least it could be something more solid! A philosophical treatise!

D. You scorn philosophy?

A. I used to have an itch for it. I studied philosophy, poetry, history; I thought in order to become Plato, all I had to do was memorize him. I wrote anthems, novels, dissertations, received a fair share of applause, thought someday I'd be Cantù, or at least Prati. But one fine day I was shooting the breeze about the idea, and that ugly mug Campagna—no one's listening here, are they?—gave me a counter-demonstration. It was like having your beard torn out hair by hair, and each hair was another idea vanishing forever. Miraculous conversion: from a boy, I became a man. I don't believe in philosophy anymore; I've become an astronomer. De Gasperis had it right: they tenured him, knighted him, and now he's loaded with cash. Let's talk about the stars and leave the Earth alone. Philosophy leads a gentleman straight to suicide.

D. So philosophy is for children.

A. Children and crazies. Just the way today we laugh at the puerile explanations the ancient philosophers gave of the world, posterity will laugh at all our hubbub around the idea. Theology and philosophy are destined to fade away in the face of progress in the natural sciences, just like astrology, magic, etc. As observation advances, the circle of speculation grows smaller and smaller. What used to belong to theology and philosophy today belongs to physics, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics. Once upon a time the sun was Apollo and was explained by myth; later, with Pythagoras, it entered into philosophy and learned to dance to the music of the spheres. A good telescope put an end to all that foolishness. When I don't know something, instead of building castles in the air and oozing brain juice—instead of explaining a mystery with still more obscure mysteries, whether theological or philosophical—I just admit it: I don't know. If all the time wasted on these fantasies had been spent cultivating the natural sciences, we'd be way ahead. You've turned pensive.

D. And yet this century began with such faith, such fervor, but here we are barely at the midway point, and already most people think like you do.

A. It shows we're becoming wiser. It makes me laugh to think of all those pompous professors and their systems. Two good cannonballs scattered all their ideas. Who believes that stuff anymore? As for me, whenever I mention the idea, I see Campagna coming at me. It was a revolution of professors and students. Who believes professors anymore? Look at them: they dropped their ideas and went to serve the victors, who pull this or that academic out of their holes, depending on their mood. We declare war on Russia, so the professors pontificate about civilization. There's a coup, so they cite progress to cover it with shadow. When the leaders start chasing down the emigrants, the professors wave order in our face. We're puppets made to dance for others' pleasure, but consider the irony! It's all in the name of ideas that we ourselves have hoisted up. How much credit can you grant these ideas, once so pretty, now so old and common?

D. Arthur Schopenhauer is just right for you.

A. Arthur Schopenhauer again! I just told you what I think of philosophers and philosophy. I can't stand ideas anymore.

D. Schopenhauer is the enemy of ideas.

A. A philosophy without ideas? That seems impossible. I'm starting to like this Schopenhauer.

D That's not all; he agrees with you in lots of things. For example, philosophy, he says, should not concern itself with anything beyond experience, such as what is the world,

where does it come from, where it's going, etc. Its matter is not the *what*, but the *how*: only the observable can be known.

A. Bravo, Saint Thomas. See and touch. We're already in the era of the natural sciences. But what about God, what telescope does he use to observe God?

D. God goes with all those things outside experience. Schopenhauer says, "Let's think about the things we can have actual experience of, and leave everything else in peace; it's only a waste of time." That's Proudhon's position too.

A. Bravissimo. That way we'll get along with the priests. After making such great claims, philosophy beats a retreat. Let the priests tell us what the world is, where it comes from, where it's going. The day the philosophers sign this act of abdication will be party time in Rome. Fine. Let Father Curci teach catechism, and we can busy ourselves with physics, chemistry, astronomy. As long as he stays out of trouble, Schopenhauer is okay with me

D. Since I have to write this article and we have to talk about something, I'll explain Schopenhauer's system to you.

A. My dear man, you tempt me. Ultimately it's a philosophy. And let me make an observation: all these modern philosophers battle one another, they scowl at each other, but in substance they agree on certain maxims that stink of the gallows. Robespierre or some other guy discovered the secret with their goddess of Reason. They turned Reason into a kind of overseer: Reason governs the world. This is the evil root from which grows the theory of progress, the world made divine, the triumph of the idea, all for the best with Doctor Pangloss, inviolability and human dignity, freedom, and similar scarecrows. And to think I believed in all this, and it nearly cost me my skin. Oh, and I even forgot the theory of sacrifice and how sometimes the individual must let himself be killed for the greater glory and prosperity of the species. Squeeze, squeeze, and tell me if this isn't the juice of all modern philosophies. Some will admit it shamelessly, some pull temperament out of their hats, others come out with the possible entity, another with the logical entity, someone with intuition, another with demonstration, or with the dialectical process. One's an ontologist, the other a psychologist; this one's a realist, that one's an idealist. My esteemed philosophers, glare at me all you like but you'll never catch me. You're all made from the same dough.

D. But don't you see that this is exactly our century's greatest claim to praise? This unanimous doctrine under all the surface differences professed by professors; displayed in art, infiltrated into science, entered into history, witnessed by martyrdom, to the point where it's become the religion, the faith, the character, and I'd say the spirit of our time? Posterity can't help admiring a century that professed such a noble philosophy, made vivid by devotion, sealed with blood. It's hard to find two generations of people so heroic, industrious, and committed as those of '89 and 1830.

A. I see that the smoke of ’48 still hasn’t cleared from your brain. Too bad no one yanked your beard out.

D. On the contrary, I’m indebted for that to the jailer at San Vito, one of the most well brought up and courteous lieutenant dukes of the old regime.

A. I don’t think those jailers were required to be courteous and well brought up. I see you’re a desperate case. With your example, you should have understood that what governs the world is not reason, but the jailer at San Vito. What a fine overseer reason is, or as they say, the idea! It appears like a comet, but at the first blow it beats a hasty retreat, leaving its faithful followers in the muck. They say the blows are merely an *accident*—anything they can’t explain with the idea they call an accident—and the accident has no reason for being; it’s as though it never really happened. So we can console ourselves: the hangings, the imprisonment, the blows and beard-pulling never existed, or, to put it better, they existed, but they need not have. I wish these philosophers would have an accident! Posterity—since you bring up posterity—should have quite a laugh when they think that for a good half-century we believed that being and thought were identical, which gave birth to all these fine doctrines.
As though all the nonsense that passes through my head, because I think it, must exist, and as though everything that happens, unless I think it, doesn’t exist, has no right to exist, and is merely accidental. Has anyone ever heard anything so absurd? You can ricochet your ideas around like bullets however you like because they have no cannons to defend themselves with, and each one is contained in the other, so all you have to do is pull one of them out and all the others follow in procession. Philosophical systems seem to me like toy castles of children’s blocks; made, unmade, and remade in thousands of ways. And there’s nothing wrong in that, because, since we have brains and can’t do without them, it’s a fine way to pass the time. But the game turns serious when we confuse ideas with things, and people put their hands on things and want to play the game that way. Because things have cannons, and don’t want to go along with your ideas, and if you insist, you end up with a cracked skull. Everything’s possible as long as it’s all on paper, because everything can be seen in different ways, and you can pull it left or right to line it up with your favorite ideas, and facts are like those poor souls on the bed of Procrustes, cut down to size or stretched out flat. Read the philosophers, and you’ll find the same fact used to sustain the most varied ideas, according to what the system needs. But when it comes down to facts. . . . it’s very clear. And I can’t understand why no one has found a man with a pulse, with good sense, who has said so. Our century was a period of illusion, or rather of generalized imbecility.

D. But there has been this man of with a pulse, a man with judgment: it’s Arthur Schopenhauer. Surprised? Do you think Arthur was born yesterday? He was born in 1788 and published his principle work, these two volumes here, in 1819 in

Leipzig.[1] And it was like the prophecy of Cassandra. At that time, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel reigned supreme, as though they'd enchanted the world. No one paid attention to Arthur. Indignant, Arthur shrugged his shoulders and with a sardonic laugh turned to commerce and banking, saying, "Just wait; you'll see."

A. And we have seen, that's for sure. If I'd had his judgment, my wallet would be stuffed by now. How much time I wasted on these Schellings and Hegels, these Gioberti and Rosmini, these Leroux, Lammennais and Cousin! The things I imagined! It seemed so easy to me to turn the world upside down with the magic wand of the idea! If only I could be twenty years younger with the judgment I have today. If only the young could read the future!

D. But Arthur, still young, read it very clearly and, scorning the scorn of his contemporaries, appealed to the future. And this future, after so many disillusionments, seems by now to have arrived, at least judging from you and many others who think the same way.

A. Singular destiny of man, that he doesn't comprehend the truth until it's too late.

. . . And by the time
You begin to repent
Your shameful error, your time is spent.

Metastasio has a golden pen, and his good sense is worth more than all the intuition and dialectic. If only I'd stuck with my Metastasio when a foolish uncle placed it in my hands! But you know how it is: the propagators of falsehood are animated by a genius I'd call infernal, and are miraculously skilled in the art of leading dimwits by the nose, who constitute the majority, while the friend of truth is modest, simple, and unlucky.

D. That's exactly right. Schopenhauer himself explains why his contemporaries consigned him to oblivion. Many histories of philosophy have been written, and in all of them you can find mention of exquisite mediocrities, and not a word on Schopenhauer; you'd say they were afraid of him. You begin to suspect there's a conspiracy at work, the most formidable kind, which can kill a man: a conspiracy of silence. Meanwhile, everyone's squealing about Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, trumpeted as the educators of the human species.

A. Or the executioners. Because they're the prime cause why so many people went out to get themselves killed. And why I had my beard torn out as I discoursed on the absolute.

D. Charlatans and sophists, says Schopenhauer; not philosophers, "because they wanted to appear, not to be," and they sought not truth, but government appointments and money from students and booksellers; excellent in the art of conning the public and

[1] *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung.*

promoting their merchandise. Which is certainly to their merit, but it's not philosophy. One moment they seem impassioned, in another they're persuasive; now they're severe, obscure, fraught with formulas, word merchants self-baptized as thinkers. In vain you seek in them that serene, clear exposition which is the beauty of a philosopher. Instead they look to the effect; they want to seduce, drag you in; they adopt oracular tones to make you take lightning bugs for lanterns. Kant had shown that the world is a phenomenon of mind, but that below the phenomenon there is a thing-in-itself, outside consciousness. That's where his mistake was; if he had baptized this thing-in-itself, he would have added the final stone to the temple of philosophy.

A. The Devil! Nothing's left to do but baptize this thing-in-itself?

D. Exactly; and Schopenhauer placed that final stone. But listen: since Kant closed the door and had the imprudence to announce that, on the other side, there was the the transcendent, unknowable thing-in-itself, , everyone crowded around that door, hungry to get at the forbidden fruit. Then came the charlatans. Fichte, not a disciple but a caricature of Kant, was first to step forward, saying, "You blockheads! Leave that door alone; Kant was only joking, there's nothing in there. The thing-in-itself, the truly real, does not exist. Everything is produced by the brain, by the I." And it was Fichte who introduced formulas into philosophy, the oracles, all that quackery, which has honed to perfection by Hegel. But the kernel was too big to swallow. So here came the people pounding on the door again and saying, "Give us the real." Then Schelling, more cunning, says, "It's useless to knock; there's nothing in there. The real exists, and there's no need to look for it inside. The real is before you, but you don't see it, like someone looking for his hat when it's on his head. What you call the ideal is what you are seeking: the real. Thinking and being are one thing."

A. Ah, the evil seed: thought and being are identical. And it's not even new! My teacher used to cite to me the words of Spinoza: "*Substantia cogitans et substantia extensa una eademque est substantial . . . mens et corpus una eademque est res*."

D. But here's the trick, says Schopenhauer: Kant opposes the phenomenon to the thing-in-itself, and to distract the public from the thing-in-itself he slowly substitutes thinking and being. He switches the cards. But people see what he's doing, so they go looking for the real in the ideal, but can't find it there. "I can see it," he would say, "because I have a good telescope, which I call intellectual intuition. If you can't see it yet, rub your eyes." Hegel took pity on those poor eyes, and said, "Wait, I'll show it to you even with eyes closed." So he proposed the dialectical process. That is, he took thought out of the brain and turned it into the thing-in-itself, the absolute, the idea, bestowed with an internal restlessness, never at peace; a true, living being, which on its own impulse, and following the laws of evolution, makes its way through the centuries. Shamelessly preached, foolishly swallowed, this was pawned off as the doctrine of the idea. Hegel gave the world all the qualities, including omniscience, that had been attributed to God. Confusing metaphysics with logic, he turned the universe into logic made animate.

A. Which the nations spread around in the form of bombs, guns, and yanked-out beards.

D. Fichte was the caricature of Kant. Hegel was Schelling's clown, making him ridiculous with the idea that moves on its own, with all those concepts of becoming and all the contradictions they generate. Do you want to make a young person stupid, leave him forever incapable of thinking? Put a book by Hegel in his hands. And when he reads that being is nullity, that the infinite is the finite, that the universal is the particular, that history is a syllogism, he'll end up in the insane asylum. . .

A. Or in jail, talking logic with thieves, which is where I almost ended up. Give it to 'em, Schopenhauer!

D. Hegel is the great sinner, and Schopenhauer blames him most of all. Fichte's sin is that he passed himself off as a disciple of Kant, and Arthur blames the public, which can't pronounce Kant's name without hanging Fichte around his neck. The public, with the ears of King Midas, will never be able to grasp Kant, so they place Fichte side-by-side or even over Kant, as though Fichte non only continued, but developed to perfection what Kant merely began. That's why people today say Kant and Fichte, when they should say Kant and Schopenhauer. That's this century's first great sin. The second one is Schelling's. Thanks to Locke and Kant, philosophy had found its own foundations, resting on the absolute difference between the real and the ideal. So now here comes Schelling who turns it all upside down, confusing black and white, tossing the real and the ideal into the pit of absolute identity. Error piled on error, the evil seed sown and corruption born from it; the perversion of philosophy.
Schelling's sin was huge, but as I said, Hegel is the greatest sinner, because the public's head can't make room for intellectual intuition. With his dialectical process, Hegel gave an appearance of harmony to this philosophical monstrosity. He was its designer and architect, making the original sin durable. So Schopenhauer tore him to pieces. Charlatan, insipid, stupid, nauseating, an ignoramus whose shamelessness was touted as wisdom by cowardly followers; the true author of our century's intellectual corruption. Schopenhauer can't contain his indignation: "O, you admirers of this philosophy . . . ?" How can I say it? The Italian language is too demure; I can't translate the emphatic epithet Arthur pins on this philosophy,. . .

A. Is it really so . . .?

D. Since you're so curious, just think of the epithet Dante uses for Thais, and you'll get the idea. "Oh admirers," Schopenhauer cries, "the scorn of posterity awaits you. I can already feel it coming! And you, oh listeners, for thirty years you ignored my work, calling it less than nothing, while you honored and deified a philosophy that's mendacious, absurd, stupid, and vile! You deserve each other. Go ahead with your self-praise, you imbeciles. Schemers, sellouts, ignorant con men, devoid spirit or merit, that's what your German is, rather than men like me. This is the testament I leave you

before dying. It's a disgrace, says Wieland, to be born German: Bürger, Mozart, Beethoven, and others would have said the same, and me too: '*I n'y a que l'esprit, qui sent l'esprit*.'" Which means, "You are imbeciles and cannot understand me, Arthur Schopenhauer."

A. By God, you make me feel small, I'm turning into an imbecile.

D. Now you understand why nobody even thought about him for thirty years; his contemporaries weren't "*à sa hauteur*." They preferred Sophists and charlatans. The new generation, more intelligent, has tossed off Hegel like an old rag and gathers around Arthur. If you go to Frankfurt, go to the grand hotel there and you'll see Austrian officers listening with open mouths: it's Arthur who's preaching.

A. Schopenhauer must not be just another egghead. He understood a great truth: that if you want to propagate a doctrine, first of all you have to make philosophy into a sword. Mohammed's scimitar brought about more conversions than all our screeching in the public square. A good whack with the flat of a sword would make me cry "Long Live Schopenhauer!"

D. But Schopenhauer has still other followers: in first place, all those who are fixated on the future, the malcontents, the misunderstood, the unsatisfied. They claim to be blood brothers of the great man, saying, "Our time too will come."

A. Formidable followers, because those types, impatient with the surrounding silence, speak for hundreds.

D. And add the women, especially after Arthur called them overgrown girls, nearsighted and devoid of memory or foresight, living only in the present moment, endowed with the common intelligence of animals, barely capable of reason, liars *per excellence*, and born to remain forever subordinate.[2]

A. Not merely decorative?

D. Today, my dear, women no longer want to be treated as a decoration; gallantry is out of style. A woman wants to feel strength; the more you speak to her and the more you do with her, the more she loves you. If you stand there in front of her timorous and respectful, in her heart she tags you a dummy and teaches you a lesson. You have to use a deep voice, conduct yourself like a great man, animate your gestures, keep two or three paradoxes in reserve—they're great for grabbing attention—and spit them out in brief, imperious phrases. Plus, women today want to be regarded as spirited, even powerfully spirited; today they declare themselves atheists the same way they used to display religious devotion. Does she want to philosophize or theologize

[2] *Parerga und Paralipomena*, the chapter on women, and the other on politics.

too? Then give her Hegel and the other Sophists and, wandering among those formulas and abstractions, she'll feel the earth give way beneath her feet and her head will spin. She demands science, but for a good price, with as little investment as possible of her own resources.

A. And she's right. It would be better for men that way, too. Does it seem right that some poor gentleman has to sweat half his life away over these philosophers? If he were only sure to get something from it! You read one, emit a huge sigh and say, "That one's done,", then you take up another and start all over: new language, new formulas, new method, new opinions; you think you're moving forward but you're always in the same spot. Philosophy should be a pleasure to read, even for women.

D. That's the case with Schopenhauer. Since he traveled a lot and avoided teaching, there's nothing professorial or scholastic in him. He writes in an off-hand way in common, up-to-date speech; formulas and scientific apparatus are banished. Since some people have thick heads, he repeats the same point over and over till you're sated. After philosophizing for a while, he varies the spectacle so as to not wear you out, as though saying, "Let's have a cup of tea." Then, instead of discourse, he chats for a while, delivering insults, invectives, analogies, anecdotes, citations from Spanish, Greek, Latin, Italian, and French, that sauce up the science. It makes him a pleasure to read, especially for philosophical dilettantes of both sexes. He boasts of being clear and original, and if you don't notice it on your own, he declares it. He's not satisfied just being clear, but wants you to know it, so he's playful about it, going around and around the same thing in many different ways. He often says things older than Adam, but he's really thought them through, and expresses them in his own way. Originality comes from the way you dress things up. Under the mantle of philosophy, the reader makes out an argumentative, impassioned man, sure of himself, provocative, disrespectful, raining down blows with one hand while preening in a mirror with the other. He tickles you, amuses, and heats you up. Just think how many followers he must have, especially in Italy, where for once they can't repeat their old lament about Germanic fogginess. His philosophy is solid, all flesh and bone.

A. And what's more, it's an enemy of the idea. Someone should translate it for us. But I'm curious to know how he could form the world without the idea, because the idea scares me. I'd like to drive it away but don't know how.

D. Schopenhauer drove it away with a stroke of the pen; couldn't be easier. It's like this: Kant had said that everything is ideal, a phenomenon of mind. The world is my image: I can't really know the sun or a hand grasping earth. Everything I know, the entire world, does not exist in itself, but for another; it is an object for a subject, the vision of the one seeing. In a word, it is image, phenomena. It's the becoming of Heraclitus, the shadows of Plato, Spinoza's accident, the Hindus' deceptive veil of Maia; similar to a dream, or sunlight on sand that looks like water when seen from far off. Take away the subject, the one who sees, and the world wouldn't exist anymore.

A. That way, we're nothing but puppets and the world is a play.

D. Certainly, but behind the scenes, out of sight, is the true real, the thing-in-itself. Now, just as people don't like being called puppets—not even the ones who are—and they've been fishing for knowledge for centuries, it would have been too cruel to tell them, "Knowledge is behind the scenes and you'll never see it; all you can see is appearances." The three Sophists, wanting to please the human race, told them, "Console yourselves: appearance is the same as essence; there is nothing more behind the scenes." And they went on scribbling volumes, when after Kant, all that was really left to do was the simplest thing in the world.

A. Which was?

D. Take a look backstage. That's the glory of Schopenhauer: he threw the curtain open and found the real, the thing-in-itself, the '*Wille*'.

A. What does '*Wille*' mean?

D. Wanting. Will.

A. It took a while to find that!

D. It's Columbus's egg. Now it seems so easy and everyone says, "I could have found that too." Schopenhauer's discovery is even more important than the discovery of America, because—as its inventor rightly said—it is the truth of truths, the ultimate discovery, the only thing left for philosophy to do. And yet people had glimpsed it forever. The Chinese and the Indians raised it to a religious principle. With its whole story of original sin, Christianity meant nothing but this. We find it in the mouths of common people in every language when they say "it doesn't want to rain", attributing will not only to mankind, but to the whole universe. They don't mean to be poetic; on the contrary, it comes from a confused sense of the truth. Even the Greeks, who were closer to the ancient knowledge of the Brahmins and Buddhists, get there with the expression '*consensus gentium*'. You could call Empedocles the precursor of Schopenhauer, together with some others, because the philosopher from Agrigento—who Arthur calls '*ein ganzer Mann*', a man in full—places at the head of the world not the intellect, but love and hate, which is to say wanting, attraction and repulsion, like and dislike.[3] And since many say Empedocles was a Pythagorean, you have to think he stole his idea from Pythagoras. If Gioberti had only known this, with his soft spot for Pythagoras, he would have more warmly embraced it as a philosophical doctrine born in Italy, and flaunted it as another example of our primacy. But Gioberti didn't think of it, so all glory to Schopenhauer, because the real inventor is not the one who discovers a truth, but the one who

[3] *Über den Willen in der Natur* and *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Philosophie*.

fertilizes it, applies it, draws out its consequences, as did some Frenchman whose name I can't remember, who Schopenhauer cited once when he was worried someone else was going to claim his patent.

A. I'm amazed that Kant was two inches away from the discovery but never saw it.

D. Once he fell into phenomena, dear friend, Kant couldn't find a way out. What amazes me more is that he never came to the logical conclusion that everything is phenomena. If the phenomenon presupposes the noumenon or thing-in-itself, according to his system, it's also true that this necessity is entirely subjective, founded on the law of causality, which is also a form of the intellect. I don't think it was logic he was lacking, but courage. Having taken up philosophy to establish the basis of science, and finding himself at last facing the void, just as from the moral he had grasped the categorical imperative, from metaphysics he rose to the thing-in-itself. But that was inflicting the curse of Tantalus on mankind, telling them, "The thing-in-itself exists, but you will never know it, because it transcends experience." Now, Schopenhauer performed a great miracle, saying to experience, "Give me the thing-in-itself"; and experience gave it to him. Philosophers have so whittled down their brains over this, when all they had to do was ask themselves, what am I? I am a phenomenon like everything else, because I consider myself in space and time, which are necessary forms of my intellect. My body is an object among other objects; its movements and actions are just as inexplicable to me as the mutations of all other objects. Kant stopped here, but that road never leads to Rome, meaning that it never gets to the real. If he had only repeated the question, "What am I?", he would have gotten the answer, "I am the '*Wille*'." I move, speak, perform actions, because I want to. Neither is there a relation of cause and effect between my body and my will, because that way we'd fall into the law of causality. The act of will and the corresponding movement of the body are not two objectively different states, but the same thing in two different modes; one immediate, the other an image offered to the intellect. The movement of the body is nothing other than the act of will objectified, made image, as Arthur says. The will is the knowledge '*a priori*' of the body, and the body is the knowledge '*a posteriori*' of the will.[4]

A. Knowledge! Knowledge! Therefore will also falls under the heading of knowledge, and everything known is a phenomenon of mind, we've said. I know something because the brain is made that way.

D. But the will is an immediate knowledge, indemonstrable, outside the forms of the intellect, not logical, not empirical, not metaphysical, and not meta-logical, which are the four classes into which Schopenhauer grouped all truth. It is knowledge of a different sort, and could be called *philosophical truth per excellence*.

[4] *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. 1, par. 18.

A. That seems a quibble to me. Immediate or mediated, it is always knowledge, and it seems to me that that damned brain enters in here again, at least a bit.

D. It seems and doesn't seem! You're talking appearances, but this is a truth which even children can see. Now then, what goes for your body goes for all the others, so that '*Wille*' is the real or the thing-in-itself of the universe, and matter is '*Wille*' itself made visible.

A. I imagine that, once he surpassed phenomena and grasped the truly real, Schopenhauer has to plough with full sails into the sea of being.

D. You're mistaken. Schopenhauer opens Kant's door a little and sees the '*Wille*'. Kant had said, "Nothing is known." To this, the three imposters answered, "Everything is known." Schopenhauer pitched his tents between absolute ignorance and that absolute knowledge and concluded, "Only one thing is known and can be known: the '*Wille*'." But no sooner had he learned the venerable name than he hurried to close the door. What is '*Wille*' in itself, outside of the world? What does it do? How does it pass the time? Is there another order of things, different from our own? Other worlds? And this world, what is its origin? What is its 'Why'? Don't ask, my dear; the door is closed. You mustn't confuse Schopenhauer with those charlatans who seem to speak with God on a daily basis and reveal all his secrets. He gives you a philosophy that is modest and serious.

A. A philosophy that's not a philosophy, because it leaves you with a blank page of all the problems that constitute philosophy.

D. It's already a great merit to have demonstrated that these problems are insoluble; the impossibility of metaphysics. Up to now we had thought we'd been given an intellect to know with, so when some boob of a philosopher admonishes that nature is unknowable, we reply, "Then why do we have reason? What is intellect for?" Schopenhauer answers, "It's for eating, drinking, making money; the practical purposes of life." "Nature gives each individual what's needed to live, and nothing more. Intelligence can observe relations but not delve into the substance of things."

A. Bravo! Why can't we live without metaphysics? After all, metaphysics has always been the enemy of the stomach, not to mention the debts you have to pay to Campagna if you take it seriously.

D. Intellect can understand what's in nature, but not nature itself.

A. It seems to me that a little at a time you are forgetting '*Wille*' and falling in love with nature.

D. That's true, and happens to Schopenhauer too. The intellect cannot know "*Wille*", the thing-in-itself, and even less that which is higher still. . .

A. Leave it to the theologians. I think I can hear a holy Father preaching on the insufficiency of reason and therefore the necessity of revelation. But I confess that the more you speak, the less I understand. You say we cannot know the '*Wille*', but earlier you said that Schopenhauer knew it, although without the intervention of the brain, apparently.

D. With one distinction it all becomes clear: there's '*Wille*' and '*Wille*'. The absolute '*Wille*', is unknowable, because knowing the absolute is a contradiction in terms. Everything one recognizes as known falls under the form of our intellect, and is therefore relative. Free from relation, '*Wille*' can take its own time, and can take on all the forms it wants, including our own. To this point, we know *that* it is, but not *what* it is. The '*Wille*' we know is the '*Wille*' within us, subject and relative to the forms of space and time, the laws of causality, and therefore is accessible to the intellect.

A. That is to say, it's a phenomenon like any other.

D. The first phenomenon, that can make sense of the others.

A. Then don't sit there telling me that Schopenhauer discovered the thing-in-itself! If it's relative, then how great can it be? I'm getting a sniff of quackery.

D. Schopenhauer is not a charlatan; he was the one who said that knowledge of '*Wille*' is limited.

A. So then this '*Wille*' could be not the first principal, but it too a product of something else we don't know, which could be the real thing-in-itself.

D. Could be. But what's that to us? What matters to us is that the '*Wille*' stands underneath all phenomena, and is the thing-in-itself *for us*, and thus explains the world.

A. I don't get that either. Isn't it weird to say that there is '*Wille*' in a stone? I'd rather think there's the idea in a stone, if it weren't for Campagna.

D. Your problem is you're accustomed to seeing the '*Wille*' with your old eyes. Plebeian philosophers can't conceive of will except in service to the intellect. But with an effort of abstraction, split the intellect from the will, and what remains? That's Schopenhauer's '*Wille*'.

A. So the beginning, the first principle of all things is a blind impulse, without intelligence? I'm not buying it.

D. Otherwise you're bumping into the idea, and there goes your beard.

A. So . . .

D. So look around, and tell me you don't find the '*Wille*' everywhere. In a world where everything is phenomena, '*Wille*' is the true real that gives things the power to exist and operate. And not only the voluntary actions of animals, but the entire organism, its form and condition, the vegetation of plants, even crystallization in the inorganic realm; in sum, each primitive force that manifests in chemical and physical phenomena. Gravity itself, considered in itself and beyond appearances, is identical to the will that we find in ourselves. It's true that in animals, will is put into movement by intention, while by an impulse in the organic lives of animals and plants, and in inorganic life by simple causes in the strict sense of the term. But these differences concern the phenomenon, leaving the '*Wille*' intact. Open your ears now, so it comes through better. The intellect has generally been held as the first principle of life, the essence of things; so you see we're approaching the idea. From this supposedly comes order and universal harmony, progress, freedom, and that stuff about the world as divine. But since Schopenhauer has taken the humble '*Wille*', once believed a mere function of the intellect, and made it the first step, the intellect has become secondary, a phenomenon that accompanies '*Wille*' but is not essential to it. Intellect sticks out its head only when '*Wille*' appears in organic life, an organ of '*Wille*', a physical product, a non-metaphysical being. The intellect can go out for a stroll without the '*Wille*' leaving the building; on the contrary, in vegetable and inorganic life, there is no vestige of the intellect, so therefore it isn't the will that is conditioned by consciousness, as everyone claims, but consciousness that is conditioned by will, as Schopenhauer has it.[5]

A. I see, I see. I admit, until now I've been laughing to myself about this *Wille*, saying, "It's just a word, the baptismal name for the thing-in-itself, that Schopenhauer added to Kant." But I'm sharp, and can see where this is going: let's celebrate the funeral of the idea.

D. In effect the '*Wille*', working blindly, is not tied to any necessity such as the idea, or Spinoza's substance. Absolutely free, it can sit with its hands in its pockets, in the majesty of its quietude. When it feels an itch, a prickle, it arouses from its immobility and generates ideas.

A: Here we go: he's an idea too!

D. Don't worry. This is not Hegel's idea, but Plato's, '*species rerum*', forms and genres, still outside space and time.

A. Concepts, then.

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[5] *Über den Willen in der Natur*, preface.

D. Take it easy. You're still thinking in philosophical terms. For Schopenhauer, concepts are simple abstractions obtained from the phenomenal world, such as being, substance, cause, force, etc. They have logical but not metaphysical value; they are thought, not contemplated. No matter how hard you squeeze and press, a concept can't give you anything but a concept. And it took the shamelessness of Hegel to base philosophy on concepts. Ideas, on the contrary, are the first product of '*Wille*'. They do not generate; on the contrary, they are generated, they are, so to speak, the sketch or model of the world, perfectly available to contemplation.[6] In this theory, then, you'll find gathered together the greatest philosophical truths: Kant's thing-in-itself, Plato's forms, and the unity or immanent monism of Spinoza. The '*Wille*' is one, immanent in things; in fact things are nothing but '*Wille*' itself, put into movement, the light and appearance of '*Wille*'.

A. So Schopenhauer is a pantheist.

D. So what?

A. Mumbo Jumbo! You forget: I have to go back to Italy. The idea may turn up there sometimes, with caution, because even governments have their ideas, especially in plural form, because each government minister wants to have lots of ideas around for his personal use. But with pantheism there is no way out.

D. So console yourself. Schopenhauer is not a pantheist because his world resembles the devil more than God. Arthur says that a pantheist is he who sees the world as divine by transforming the idea into substance or into the absolute, with reason as its organ. The idea as substance operates inevitably and according to reason . . .

A. I thought pantheism consisted in admitting a single, unique, immanent substance, whether you call it substance, idea, or '*Wille*'. But since Schopenhauer insists just the opposite, what should I call it?

D. Call it monist and you'll stay out of trouble. The idea operates inevitably and according to reason, as I said. Thus you have optimism: everything is getting better and better by immutable laws, which you call progress. "But if that's the way it is," asks Schopenhauer, "How do you explain evil and error?"

A. You've put your finger on the wound. Some God, this world: a mix of folly, idiocy and scheming. God must have come up with the idea in a mental asylum.

D. But Schopenhauer dispensed with the idea and replaced it with '*Wille*', blind and free, good or evil by chance. Which would be a respectable '*Wille*' if it would only remain quiet. But since it has whims, it often has a notion to emerge from its generality and

[6] On ideas, see the principal work, I, Book 3, where you will find an exaggerated aesthetic theory.

become individual. This is its sin, where evil comes from. It could say, “I choose not to live,” and it would be God; but when it thinks, “I’d like to live,” it becomes Satan. Life is demoniacal.

A. I see this ‘*Wille*’ must be an ass, a buffoon, and a knave. I was right when I said that the real idea of the world, what governs it, is coercive, like Campagna; the closer we get to a type like that, the closer we approach the real.

D. The ‘*Wille*’ is essentially an ass until it produces the mind.

A. And how does it suddenly get a degree? I mean, if it has no consciousness, how can it produce knowledge?

D. Can’t a wise son come from a foolish father?

A. Joking aside. Why?

D. Because so it wants. ‘*Wille*’ can do anything, so when it wants to know, it forms a mind. Didn’t I say that ‘*Wille*’ loves life? As long as it wills to live like a stone or a plant, the mind never occurs to it because it can do without. But when the idea of an animal occurs, and it says, “I want to be an animal,” it forms the brain, since intellect, as I said, is necessary to animal life. ‘*Wille*’ married to intellect is what people commonly call soul.

A. An intellect born from a non-intelligent ‘*Wille*’ is a greater miracle than San Gennaro’s.

D. It’s no greater than what you find in the most ordinary facts. A stone that falls because of the law of gravity is just as much a miracle as a thinking man. ‘*Wille*’ does all this because it wants to.

A. You mean, if the stone falls, it has been willed to.

D. Certainly.

A. And if I were to throw you out the window, you would will to fall and crack your skull?

D. I am a complex being. My body would will that because it is subject to the law of gravity.

A. I’d believed up to now that in inorganic life, movement comes from outside; that is, if a stone falls, it’s because I give it a push . . .

D. Not only that; it falls because it is a stone and not a bird. It falls because its nature leads it to do so, and in that sense we can say it *wills* to fall.

A. In that case I don't understand this '*Wille*' anymore. If it follows certain laws of the physical realm, it could also follow them in the moral realm, and if it operates according to fixed laws, it is no longer '*Wille*', but idea; an intelligent '*Wille*'.

D. Think about Campagna.

A. He can't hear us here. I thought this '*Wille*' was an ass and buffoon, but now you speak to me of laws.

D. The '*Wille*' is free as long as it wants nothing, but when it wills something . . .

A. Let's stop here. A '*Wille*' that doesn't will is a contradiction in terms, because the essence of '*Wille*' is wanting.

D. But since it is free, it can also will not to want.

A. That's splitting hairs. Will is a desire that presupposes need; need presupposes a lack; and a lack presupposes an essence, a being with certain determinate qualities, with its own nature. Therefore '*Wille*' cannot be a first thing because it presupposes a being, and therefore an idea.

D. Think about Campagna.

A. You say that whenever you can't think of an answer.

D. If you keep interrupting me, we'll never finish. I was saying that when it wills something, the '*Wille*' is no longer free, as it has to adopt all means that lead to that end, so that it is subject to laws that regard the phenomenal '*Wille*', not '*Wille*' itself.

A. But then, if it wants something, '*Wille*' proposes a goal and applies necessary means. Meanwhile, you are trying to convince me that it is an ass, that it does not adopt reason, that it isn't intelligent?

D. But it does that unconsciously, like a bird who, wanting to hatch an egg, begins gathering twigs to construct a nest. The bird doesn't know the destined use of the nest. It does everything not because it thinks, but because it wants.

A. You're playing with words. Consciousness is lacking, but not intelligence. It isn't enough to want; it's necessary to know, whether consciously or not is beside the point. Your '*Wille*', if it is blind, can will whatever it pleases, but that's useless, even to form a stone. Any formation presupposes a coordination of means and ends, and that is a work of intelligence. A blind '*Wille*' forms the world! The will, my dear man, is not enough; it takes knowledge. I want to go to Paris, but if I get there without knowing the way, it

can only happen by pure chance; but out of a hundred roads, ninety-nine won't take me there.

D. But the '*Wille*' is blind not because it is actually an ass, but because it cannot be said to think and reflect; it operates without consciousness.

A. But whoever said the idea operates with consciousness, and thinks and reflects? We know that Nature operates spontaneously and unconsciously; as a consequence must it act without reason? And when Hegel sees the idea in a stone, do you think the idea reflects on and thinks the stone? If the '*Wille*' does what's required to achieve a purpose, it is a reasoning being, an idea. Don't interrupt me. All you can say now is, "Consider Campagna!".

D. If you want to see the difference between the '*Wille*' and the idea, consider the consequences. From the idea, an unreasonable, atrocious world is born.

A. Which doesn't prove that the '*Wille*' is not an idea; it only proves that it's a knave. Someone who wants something bad and adopts the means to achieve it is called evil, but not unreasoning.

D. For the idea, life is its own progressive unfolding according to its constituent laws. For the '*Wille*', life is sin; curse the moment when it says, "I want to live!" By living, it ceases being free, it imprisons itself in space and time, enters into the chain of cause and effect, becomes an individual, condemns itself to pain and misery, descending on its own legs into this vale of tears, as Empedocles and the *Salve Regina* call the world.

A. Why all this now?

D. Because the infinite '*Wille*' cannot fulfill itself under this or that form, where it always finds limits. Assuming a form is its unhappiness. Its sin, its misery, comes in saying, "I want to live . . ."

A. So it would do better to say, "I want to die"?

D. Certainly. Death is the end of evil and pain, it is the '*Wille*' that returns to itself, eternally free and happy. Living to suffer is the most asinine thing of all.

If life is misery,
Why do we bear it?[7]

[7] Giacomo Leopardi, "Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell'Asia", translated by Jonathan Galassi, *Canti. Giacomo Leopardi*, Farrar, Straus Giroux, New York, 2010, pp. 192-203, citation verses 55-56.

Life is a phenomenon, appearances, '*pulvis et umbra*', vanity of vanities, where nothing is real but pain, and once pain is taken away, comes boredom.

A. You've become distracted; from Schopenhauer you've tripped into Leopardi.

D. Leopardi and Schopenhauer are a single thing. At almost the same time, one created metaphysics and the other created the poetry of grief. Leopardi saw the world that way, and couldn't find any purpose in it.

All is mystery except our pain.[8]

Schopenhauer found the 'why' with the discovery of the '*Wille*'.

A. But doesn't Leopardi tell us about "the brute / hidden power that rules to common harm", adding right after "the boundless vanity of all"? This seems to me precisely the '*Wille*', underlying that whole series of vain appearances people call the world.

D. With this difference: Leopardi's "power" is eternal matter endowed with one or more mysterious forces, while Schopenhauer's power is a unique force, the '*Wille*', and matter is the veil of Maya, one of its appearances. One is materialist, the other spiritualist.

A. Then how could they both lead to the same consequences? We can conceive a rotten world born from matter. Materialism is one of those words that scares me as much as pantheism, but spiritualism is a word that sounds so good in the ear, the holy arc of religion, the paladin of universal civilization, a sort of passport that admits you freely into Naples and Turin, Austria and France, as far as Saint Petersburg; the true '*Verbum*', the word of words, applauded with equal indulgence by holy faith and true liberty, absolutists and liberals . . .

D. Neapolitan liberals . . .

A. Right-thinking liberals, the honest liberals of all countries. "What are you?" "I'm a spiritualist." And with this talisman, honesty beams from your forehead and garners you welcome throughout civilized Europe. I'm a spiritualist, and Ferdinand II will write me a letter of recommendation to the Pope, Louis Napoleon will guide me around Paris without a chaperone, and Cavour will nominate me a knight in the Order of Saint Maurice. Don't laugh, I know what I'm talking about.

D. So you see that I've recommended a good philosophy to you, because Schopenhauer is a spiritualist.

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[8] G. Leopardi, "Ultimo canto di Saffo", trans. Galassi, pp. 84-89, citation, verse 46.

A. And he agrees with Leopardi, who is a spiritualist! I didn't believe in philosophy anymore, but I believed in logic. Now I don't even believe in logic anymore.

D. In the name of a Greek philosopher, Leopardi says, Matter is '*ab aeterno*'", and from the breast of matter the irrational appetite germinates, and thus ignorance, error, the passions; in a word; evil. Schopenhauer said, "Matter does not exist, it is a concept, an abstraction; all that exists is appetite, the '*Wille*'." Both, that is, admit the same principle, but one plunges it into matter, while the other makes matter a mere veil. Schopenhauer's '*Wille*' is almost the Christian spirit, which descends into the body as into a prison, and is constrained to live there, but holding itself apart for fear of contagion, but sighing at the moment of separation, because what's called death is actually the true life. According to religious doctrine, the spirit is good and evil is in the body, while for Schopenhauer, evil is in the spirit, in '*Wille*', and matter is the same '*Wille*' when it deigns to appear; its ghost. That is why Leopardi and Schopenhauer agree on the consequences, positing as the originating principle of the world the same blind, malignant Power. It matters little that for one it is a force of matter, while fo the other it manifests itself in the aspect of matter; the same '*ergo*' results either way.

A. I see. I'm beginning to be suspicious of spiritualism. Schopenhauer has ruined that lovely word for me. This is the destiny of all words celebrated as beautiful when they first enter the world, but then, pulled this way and that, they become befouled, old, ugly, and make us afraid. I know so many words that long ago filled my purse and now empty it out. Spiritualism was one of the few words still afloat after so many shipwrecks, and now he had to ruin that one too. It's no longer enough today to say, "I am a liberal"; now you have to explain whether your liberality is true or false, an honest or a rogue liberality. Now it'll be the same with true and false spiritualism. A true, honest spiritualism presupposes its opposite, unlimited war between body and soul, while in false spiritualism, soul and matter are fraternal cousins.

D. Rather, they're brothers; or even more, the same thing in two different guises. Because according to Schopenhauer, the opposition between matter and spirit is an ancient philosophical prejudice introduced by Descartes, and given credit by charlatans under the name of nature and spirit. The only real distinction is between phenomenon and noumenon, or thing-in-itself. The '*Wille*' is the ' *Wille*', and the world is its phenomenon, its shadow, its eyes. All is vanity; only the '*Wille*', spirit alone, exists.

A. In Christian language, that's impiety, because in this system, the spirit is not reason, but blind appetite, the origin of sin, the spirit of evil.

D. Precisely. '*Wille*' is not a sinner; it is the only sinner. He is the one who commits all our sins.

A. So we are immaculate?

D. Immaculate.

A. I'm starting to like this Schopenhauer again, despite his false spiritualism. I am already beginning to feel childish innocence running through my veins. If he can demonstrate that man does not sin, from here on we'll do whatever we like.

D. As though up to now we'd been doing what we don't want!

A. Believe me, I can tell you that up to now I've done many things that I wouldn't have wanted to do.

D. That's an illusion. You are a phenomenon of '*Wille*', and what you've done, it was your '*Wille*' that willed it.

A. I've often had the itch to yell "Long Live Liberty!" in the middle of the public square.

D. So why didn't you do it?

A. Fear of Campagna.

D. That is to say, if you hadn't been afraid, you would have done it. You behave according to your nature. Once it takes the form of an individual, the '*Wille*' is no longer free, but either this or that, that is, conditioned in this way or that way, with such and such a character. Having given itself a character, it operates accordingly. Operating according to one's character is doing what one wants.

A. A misuse of language, because doing what one wants, in substance, is doing what one can. But in certain cases, of two possible actions, I can do both, and if I do one of them, I know I could also have done the other, but I didn't want to. Therefore, I am perfectly free.

D. A misuse of language, an illusion of the mind. Why did you do one and not the other?

A. For such and such a reason.

D. And the reason that predominates has induced you to act with the same fatal necessity with which the law of gravity operates in a stone. Falling, the stone commits no sin, because it obeys its nature. A thief, thieving, commits no sin, because he merely obeys his character.

A. But the stone cannot *not* fall, while the thief may choose not to steal.

D. You still don't get it. Suppose the thief hesitates before the act, and Hell opens before him, and he sees the Commandments of God, dishonor, imprisonment, etc. What will he do? If he doesn't steal, it's no virtue, but a necessary effect of his character; he has a character such that those images have a certain effect on him. And if he steals, it's no sin because, given his character, he could no more resist thieving than a stone can choose not to fall. A free man is a "*contradiction in adiecto*", because man is a conditioned and determined being. In order to foresee what a person will do, all you need is to know that person's character well. Now do you understand why mankind is immaculate?

A. And morality? And duty?

D. Duty, Schopenhauer says, is another abstraction. No one has the right to say, "You must", and one of Kant's defects is having come up with that categorical imperative of his. Duty and its opposite presuppose a freedom of choice that contradicts the concept of man. Go ahead and tell me, "Thou Shalt Not Kill", but I will kill if my character leads me to do it; and it won't be a sin.

A. But if they hang you?

D. They hang me justly.

A. What? I begin to worry that your brain is out taking a walk somewhere. Why should they hang me? If there is no guilt, there is no punishment. What would I have to answer for?

D. Not for your action, but for your character. Why are you made that way?

A. Oh, nice! What do I have to do with it? It's that rascal '*Wille*' that made me do it.

D. And if they hang you, it's not you they hang, but '*Wille*'.

A. This too? But I'm the one who feels the pain.

D. That is to say, '*Wille*' feels it; because that in you which is truly real is the '*Wille*'; all else is mere phenomena.

A. But the '*Wille*' in me is the same '*Wille*' in my hangman.

D. Certainly.

A. So the '*Wille*' doing the hanging is the same '*Wille*' being hanged.

D. Certainly.

A. My head is starting to spin.

D. In fact, that is the basis of morality. When we shall be convinced that in everyone there is the same, single '*Wille*', we will feel as brothers one to another, drawn together in reciprocal sympathy. And since the same '*Wille*' is in animals—actually in all things universally—our heart will blaze in universal affection . . . .[9]

A. Even toward the asses.

D. Our brothers, like everything else. This affection will become a profound compassion when we reflect that because of '*Wille*', we are unhappy, condemned irremediably to suffer. And instead of making war on one another, we will pity each other and blame impious Nature that made us this way.

A. As Leopardi says.

D. Well said. For Leopardi, the principal ethic or morality is compassion . . .

A. Even toward the knaves!

D. Sure; in fact a little bit more compassion still toward them, because they aren't the culpable ones, but impious Nature. They cannot do otherwise than what they do, and are to be pitied as we pity the sick and insane. If people saw one another in this way, there would no longer be envy, nor scorn, nor jealousy, nor ambition, nor hate. The entire vocabulary would be reduced to a single word: compassion.

A. I see a wealthy young man, full of ingenuity and learning, beloved of women, honored and fêted, and I should tell him, "I pity you!" He'd challenge me to a duel, thinking I was mocking him.

D. He'd be an idiot to do that. But if he had an inch of brain, he would pity himself and you and all the others. Pleasure is negative, incapable of satisfying the infinite '*Wille*'. Just wait, and below the most desired pleasures you will see boredom and pain spurt out. Pleasure is a labile appearance, beneath which inexorably lays the sole true reality of pain. You tell me whether wealth, beauty, brilliance, and glory are anything but phantoms and illusion.

A. Who are you, Saint Paul?

D. Listening to Leopardi and Schopenhauer, you often think you're hearing a holy Father.

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[9] *Die Beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik*.

A. A holy Father in a mask. Look carefully and you'll notice the devil's horns underneath.

D. Ultimately it's a philosophical enemy of the idea, enemy of freedom, enemy of progress. I thought you'd like it.

A. Yes Sir! I'll go to Naples, take Campagna by the arm, and tell him, "I pity you! You seem so content: wretch, what are you enjoying? You seem so confident: wretch, what is your pride? You and the lowest bum in Naples are the same thing." Campagna will caress my beard (if he doesn't yank it out first) and give me a look meaning, "You'll end up on the gallows." So I say, "My fine man, what would you gain? Don't you know, my sweet Campagna, that according to the new philosophy, by hanging me you hang yourself. And if you slap my face, that slap returns to yours, and if you beat me, I take on an air of compassion and say, 'Poor Campagna, don't you know you're beating yourself?'."[10]

D. It seems a caricature, but it's the truth.

A. The hard part is believing it.

D. Citing an ancient sage, Schopenhauer says that truth is in a well. As soon as it wants to stick its head out, it gets a rap on the knuckles. But eventually it finds its way. And there's another advantage: with this philosophy, not only do the idea and freedom go away, but also patriotism, nationalism, humanity, the philosophy of history, and revolution.

A. You're a sly one. When I'm about to kick Schopenhauer in the ass, you have a skill for ingratiating me to him all over again.

D. You'll end up saying, "Long Live Schopenhauer!"

A. But Kant, his maestro, predicted revolution, and always talked about rights, fatherland, and freedom. His morality makes you pardon his metaphysics.

D. Just the opposite, you contradictory man.

A. Why do you say I'm contradictory?

D. Because one moment you speak out of your thinking, and the next out of fear.

A. You're right. Sometimes I forget Campagna.

D. The opposite happens in Kant, as his sharp-witted disciple observes. Because, as long as he was set on constructing a metaphysics, Kant reasoned with his brain. But once he

[10] *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. 1, par. 63.

saw before him the beautiful, complete edifice, he became afraid and remembered Campagna, which is to say the Old and New Testaments, so he was overcome with fear and prejudice. Since in the Commandments he found a litany of "Thou Shalts" and "Thou Shalt Nots", he imagined an absolute, categorical duty; the same man who had earlier considered the absolute to be transcendent and hypothetical. Along with duty came the immortality of the soul; reward and punishment (the egoistic foundation of vulgar morality); freedom conjoined to the concept of a creator God (as though being created and being free was not a contradiction), and he denied the maxim that "*operari sequitur esse*", that is, that everyone acts as they do because that's the way they were made. In this way Kant, while believing he was philosophizing, was really theologizing, and thus lost all merit and credit, when to crown his work he conjured up a speculative theology.[11]

A. Fear is a great philosopher.

D. Schopenhauer tore down this philosophy of fear, and by concentrating on metaphysics and adding the '*Wille*', he created, as he justly boasts, the only philosophy that can provide a morality and a political philosophy. I have to account for my actions because I am the one who performs them: my mistake is to be myself rather than you, and no other.[12]

A. But what fault is it of mine to have been born this way?

D. The fault is in the '*Wille*' which, in making an evil man, must have had an evil whim.

A. So why am I the one who has to pay? This reminds me of that preceptor who, wanting to punish the son of his marquis but not daring touch the limbs of his master's offspring, beat his classmates instead.

D. A silly analogy. You 've forgotten that everything is '*Wille*', including yourself, so it is always '*Wille*' that bears the punishment. This is an unfailing foundation of morality which neither Judaism, Catholicism, pantheism, nor materialism was able to find. All glory to Schopenhauer, who, having secured morality, also offers a prescription for politics. Listen closely.

A. I'm all ears. This is the knot. For me, a philosophy is true or false, blessed or cursed, whether it pushes me toward or leads me away from Campagna.

D. Imagine Campagna hearing us, and tell me whether he woudn't be the first one to clap his hands. First listen to what today's liberals say. Schopenhauer says they call themselves optimists, believing that the world has its own purpose and that we are

[11] *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. 1; *Dei Beiden Grundprobleme del Ethik*.
[12] *Dei Beiden Grundprobleme del Ethik*; *Parerga und Paralipomena*, I, par. 9.

sailing straight toward happiness.[13] And since they see the earth under travail due to every manner of misfortune, they attribute this to governments, and preach that, once they were taken away, there would be paradise on earth, and the world's purpose would be fulfilled. Translated properly, it turns out that the world's purpose happens to be the same as their own, which is to eat, get drunk, expand, and multiply without a care in the world.

A. Campagna tells me that that's exactly what he has often said.

D. To grasp them rightly, they speak of humanity and progress, but in substance they're thinking about their gut. They imagine the State to have a mission: that it is the organ, the instrument of progress, which in their language means it is the dispenser of jobs and money for themselves. But here's the truth: men are by nature scoundrels and violent, and the earth would be populated with assassins and thieves if the State weren't there to guarantee property and lives. That is its mission, and when a government protects you from thieves and murderers, you are the scoundrel if you contest its authority and tell it, "Give me a part too." Therefore all the current governments of Europe are excellent, because they all provide for security, and we—I mean the demagogues—are the true disturbers of the peace.

A. Campagna says, "That man deserves the cross of San Gennaro."

D. Now, since men are inclined toward evil and violence, and their actions are regulated not by reason but by '*Wille*', that is, by instincts and passions, the State, in order to control them, should not adopt persuasion, but physical force. Because men are just as cowardly as they are violent, and obey only fear. Be feared to be obeyed.

A. Campagna says that all logic should be reduced to this sole conclusion.

D. Power must be in the hands of a single man, because wherever power is divided among more people, the power is scattered and thus less effective. Monarchy, on the other hand, better conforms to the '*Wille*'. First of all, there is a single '*Wille*'. Then, look around: you'll see the bees, ants, elephants, wolves and all the other animals, when in procession, always follow behind one who is in the lead. An industrial company, an army, and aa steamship all have a single chief. The animal organism is monarchical, because the brain alone is king. The planetary system too is monarchical. The king is the incarnation of the people, and may fairly say, "I am the people."[14]

A. Campagna says that they should appoint him director of the support fund for journalists.

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[13] *Parerga und Paralipomena*, col. XIm ch. IX; *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. II, ch. XVII.

[14] The part concerning politics is taken almost verbatim from ch. IX, *Parerga und Paralipomena*

D. Don't interrupt me. A king, a head of State who maintains justice for all, is, however, a simple ideal, and an ideal is by nature ethereal and may easily vanish into vapor. To give him a bit of consistency, just like certain chemical substances that are never found in isolation but always mixed with other substances, the State must include other elements, such as the nobility, the clergy, and privileges. All this stinks a bit of the arbitrary and violent, but it is nevertheless better than a State regulated purely by reason, so as not to break with custom and to assure stability. By contrast, see the United States, where pure, abstract law dominates, freed from any arbitrary elements. There you'll find the most abject materialism with its inseparable companion, ignorance. There reigns stupid Anglican bigotry, brutal crudeness combined with the most simpleminded veneration of the woman. Add to that their cruelty against the blacks; daily murder unpunished; brutal duels; scorn for rights and the law; greed for the land of neighbor;, homicidal ambushes and raiding parties; corruption and immorality. This is the fruit of a republic, which should be rejected especially by men of ingenuity, who are always overwhelmed by the ignorant many, while they are prized and celebrated by monarchs. Monarchy conforms with '*Wille*'. The republic is an artificial construction, a fruit of reflection, an exception in history, not only of doubtful durability but also contrary to civilization, seeing as how in all eras and among all peoples, the arts and sciences have never flourished except under monarchies. Is it not so?

A. My '*Wille*' is wrestling with my brain. '*Wille*' wants to say yes, but the brain is making faces and whispering, "Greece, Rome, Italy."

D. Greece was an ephemeral apparition; Rome is all in the century of Augustus; and Italy was truly and long barbarian, like all the Middle Ages. In any case, if you want your '*Wille*' to win, all you have to do is study Schopenhauer.

A. That would be better. But you don't consider that the monarchy today is unable any longer to protect your neck; it has been infiltrated by the poison of Constitution. Which monarchy is Schopenhauer referring to?

D. Be of good spirit, for Arthur has also thought about your neck. A constitutional king, he says, is ridiculous, like the gods of Epicurus, who think only of getting fat on Olympus and care not for what happens down here. Let England keep theirs, because it's dear to them and suits their nature. But we are really buffoons when we put on an English tailcoat. One of the stupidest institutions is that of the jury, because the thick heads of the common people can comprehend nothing but a "*calculus probabilium*", and they can't distinguish verisimilitude from certainty, and think only of the shop and their children. The jury is praised for its impartiality, as though the "*malignum vulgus*" were impartial! Freedom of the press can be maintained as a safety valve against revolutions, a release for evil humors. On the other hand, it is like granting the freedom to sell poison, because all the outrages they print stamp themselves easily onto the brains of the dupes, and a fool is capable of anything once he has an idea stuck in his head.

A. Dear jurists, dear freedom of the press, dear constitution, I bid you adieu. My beard lays serenely on my chin. But we still have patriotism and nationalism, which is worse. I hadn't thought of that.

D. But Schopenhauer has. '*Wille*' exists only in individuals, while fatherland, the people, humanity, and nationality are abstractions, empty concepts. Modern Spinozans see it differently, and especially those brain-rotted followers of Hegel, whose mediocrity the Germans should have been able to read in his forehead, if only they had studied physiognomy. Nature had inscribed on his face, "an ordinary man".[15] Now, he and the modern charlatans with him maintain that the ultimate goal of existence is the family and the nation; that the world is harmoniously ordered according to established laws; that history is therefore a science, and the actions of a people, rather than those of individuals, bear philosophical interest. If they had read Schopenhauer, they would have seen that only the actions of an individual have unity, morality, meaning, and reality because the '*Wille*' alone is thing-in-itself. Multiplicity is mere appearance: peoples and their lives are an abstraction, just as the category of species is an abstraction applied to nature. Only the individual, not humanity, has real unity; the history of humanity is a fiction. Historical events are the long, confused dream of humanity, and wishing to explain them seriously makes you like one who sees faces and animals in the clouds.[16] History therefore is not science, but a grab-bag of arbitrary events, where there may be coordination but no subordination. A biography is more interesting than the history of humanity, because there you will find an eternal page of '*Wille*': egoism, hate, love, fear, courage, superficiality, stupidity, cunning, spirit, genius. Meanwhile in history you find a presumed world spirit, a pure phantom, labile and meaningless events which took place due to the most insignificant causes, like clouds agitated by wind. Fools and the malcontents of today entrust themselves to tomorrow, not seeing that time is phenomena, that the future is similar to the past, that there is nothing new under the sun, that the surface shifts but the background remains the same, and that the world resembles certain Italian comedies, where, under diverse plots, you find that Pantalone is always Pantalone, and Colombina always Colombina. Even if we may postulate intellectual progress, men remain unchanged. Neither institutions nor education can render them less evil and less unhappy. *Moral* progress is a dream.

A. So let's close the universities and schools, and abolish all histories.

D. That's not what I'm saying. History is not entirely useless, because a people that doesn't know its own history is like a man with no memory of his own life, bound into the present like an animal.

A. But '*Wille*' is within the individual; '*Wille*' provides character, and from character comes necessity and the subordination of events. The people is a poetic fiction devoid of

[15] *Parerga und Paralipomena*, ch. XXIX.
[16] *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, XI.

'*Wille*', without character. Its history is a mass of clouds and varied tropes, and I don't see what good can come from it.

D. It always provides a bit of experience. An old lady who has experienced the effects of a medicine in one case, by remembering, can use that same medicine in a similar case.

A. That is to say, history is an empirical doctor.

D. Do you really think there is any medicine to heal the travails of humanity? They are incurable ills, inherent in our nature.

A. What about the monarchy, with its nobles, priests and privileges?

D. They serve only to guarantee order.

A. And that seems so little to you?

D. Well, just as pleasure is a negation and only pain is real, there is nothing affirmative in order. The affirmation is in the violation.

A. My head is exploding! No means yes and yes means no. This invention deserves first prize, and we can give second prize to Hegel, who says that yes and no are the same thing.

D. If violations didn't exist, there would be no law. Law is the negation of the violation. The State is the custodian of law because it defends me from whoever wants to do me ill. That's why it is a police commissioner rather than a doctor. It cannot heal our ills, and it wouldn't even be desirable for it to do so.

A. This is a true discovery that no one has ever said before. Up to now I have been telling myself, "Leopardi said this too." Because Leopardi doesn't believe in progress, he laughs at the philosophy of history and reputes our ills to be incurable. The only thing I can't figure out is that business of order and violation, although I remember that from Father Bartoli. But neither in Leopardi, nor in Bartoli, nor in anyone else do I find that it would be undesirable for us to be healed.

D. Because if your pain is healed, what remains is not pleasure—which is a negation—but a still more damaging enemy: boredom. Also because, if everyone were happy, there would be such a population boom that its consequences would terrify even the most courageous imagination.[17]

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[17] *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung,* I, par. 62.

A. Sorry, Gioberti. We have to admit the superiority of Schopenhauer's brain. Your brain would never have been able to discover this, no matter how resourceful it was. What kind of world is this? Native land is an abstraction; humanity is a fiction; history is playing with clouds; the individual is incurably condemned to pain and boredom. So why live? Let's all kill ourselves. Lovely, adorable, merciful death.

Shut these sad eyes now on the light,
O queen of time.[18]

D. Leopardi is too quick to draw conclusions. From this hell, Schopenhauer was able to draw forth paradise, and this is really where he flies like an eagle.

A. I challenge Schopenhauer to arrive at any conclusion other than suicide.

D. You're on: listen and learn. The Indians and the Christians have found the true remedy. You have to die, but without ceasing to live.

A. Which is the most convenient way to satisfy both life and death.

D. '*Wille*' desires to live, always running toward life; life is its eternal present. And living means abandoning oneself to the satisfaction of all desires and needs. First it operates as a blind impulse, without consciousness, and says, "I want to live." Then it gives itself a brain endowed with intellect, recognizes itself in a cosmic image, and again says, "I want to live." Man is endowed not only with intellect, like animals, but also reasoning, and always says, "I want to live." And just as life, which is to say the satisfaction of needs and desires, is more difficult in the form of man, it has constructed a more artful brain, such that the intellect is more acute and quick, and added reasoning—which the three charlatans consider the absolute faculty—which, in substance, the '*Wille*' has combined with intellect to serve its needs. The intellect provides only for the present, whereas the faculty of concepts, reasoning, abstracts, generalizes, coordinates, subordinates, links present to past, and predicts the future. Armed with these two incredibly powerful weapons, '*Wille*' in the form of man abandons itself to the pleasure of living. This is the source of its unhappiness, because desire begets desire, need generates need, and since satisfaction is impossible, it lives in agitation.

A. It needs a tranquilizer.

D. Reason, in fact, gives it a sedative. Having experienced the pain of life, in a few men of judgment the reason speaks thus: "Don't you notice that individuals are fleeting dreams, that everything passes away, pleasure is mere appearance, and the will to live and love of life are the roots of all your ills?" There's no way out except by making war on '*Wille*', that is, on the desires, the passions, by considering all things men chase

[18] G. Leopardi, "Amore e morte", trans. Galassi, pp. 225-233, citation, verses 106-107.

after— such as pleasures, honors, wealth—as empty phantoms, and by killing in yourself the will to live and enjoy. "*Sustine et abstine*": follow this principle, and you shall recover spiritual peace.

A. The peace of the tomb.

D. Now you know what it means to die without ceasing to live. You live while renouncing the enjoyment of life, recognizing it as a vain thing. Only the man furnished with reason is capable of it. Animals and everything else want to live; you alone can raise yourself above life because once you are expert in reason, which does not stop at individuals but—with memory of the past and the foresight toward the future—bestows you with universal awareness, allowing you to ask, "What use is life? What gain comes of all this weary chasing after it? '*le jeu vaut-il bien la chandelle*'. And when you persuade yourself that life isn't worth the pain a gentleman suffers for its sake . . . ."

A. What will I do?

D. You will kill the '*Wille*' that entices you toward life.

A. That is, the '*Wille*' kills itself.

D. Certainly. Free and omnipotent, '*Wille*' affirms and negates itself. Through reason, it arrives at its own negation. And because the generative act is the center of '*Wille*' when it wants to live, the first thing to abstain from are carnal pleasures, and then you must castigate the flesh with fasting, hairshirts, and abstinence.

A. Like Saint Anthony in the desert.

D. The brahmins and saints will be your example; the remedy can be reduced to these three famous words: chastity, poverty, obedience. Thus to live is to die, without having recourse to suicide, the refuge of weak spirits.

A. And do this while others amuse themselves and mock me?

D. Rather, you mock them, because from the heights of your serenity you will look on, as though from a safe port you were observing men at sea caught up in a tempest. And you will do as Schopenhauer did, who, in '48 when men ran like madmen one against the other, stood apart observing them through a telescope, and chuckled into his beard, saying, "Go ahead and kill each other; I'll stay here a contemplate the '*Wille*'." In effect, if men were to persuade themselves that liberty, humanity, nationality, the fatherland and all the other things they become so passionate about were mere appearances and abstractions, each of them would remain quietly at home, dedicated to the contemplative life in both public and private. Instead of running around the city squares exhausting and tormenting themselves and others, they would stretch out on a couch,

smoking with gusto like a Turk, and watch their individuality slowly evaporate into the swirling smoke, and feel themselves to be pure '*Wille*'.

A. The couch and pipe is too much; whoever wants to die while living should be able to do without that too. I imagine poor Schopenhauer like a Trappist monk, martyr to chastity, poverty, and obedience, sweet as a lamb, his body covered with sores from his hairshirt.

D. Schopenhauer eats divinely, takes as much pleasure as he is still capable of, yells and kicks up a din, tyrannized by '*Wille*'. If you mention Hegel he begins to rant, so to calm him down you have to deliver a eulogy in praise of his clarity and originality.

A. What use, therefore, is philosophy?

D. Philosophy is theoretical knowledge that has nothing to do with practice. Reason can no more make you virtuous than aesthetics can make you an artist. Everyone behaves according to their nature; nor can you be a saint without the vocation, meaning unless the '*Wille*' has given you such a character. Poets are born, not made, and the same goes for saints: "*Velle non discitur*". Schopenhauer doesn't give you precepts. He never says, "You must kill in yourself the desire to live." No prohibitions, no categorical imperatives. He describes the actions of men but never imposes them. The knowledge of the world as phenomenon operates as a motive and binds you to life; the knowledge of the world as essence operates as a sedative and detaches you from life. It isn't necessary for philosophy to give you knowledge; it's enough that it be immediate. What is necessary is that you have grace, a predisposition toward sainthood.[19]

A. We began with Kant and ended with Saint Augustine. Personally, I think I lack grace, because that matter of chastity, poverty, and obedience just doesn't go down well. I want to live cheerfully, and when we have to die, we'll die. Or if chance has it that my life becomes unbearable, I'd much prefer returning into the lap of '*Wille*' all at once rather than slowly approaching it with a long death called life. I prefer Leopardi to Schopenhauer.

D. You're in error. Leopardi meets Schopenhaur in substantial points of his doctrine, but stands below him in many respects. First of all, Leopardi is a poet, and typically men show little faith in a doctrine expressed in verse, because poets have a reputation as liars.

A. But Leopardi also philosophized in prose.

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[19] *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung,* I.

D. Not philosophy exactly; philosophy requires method. This is one of the glories of Schopenhauer. There have been many controversies over analysis and synthesis, psychology and ontology, but without including Schopenhauer, whose work would have shifted the balance like the sword of Brennus. Arthur says that analysis and synthesis are malapropisms, while induction and deduction would be more accurate. The philosophical method is no different from all the empirical sciences: its foundation is experience, on the basis of which it makes judgments, which requires a faculty of judgment halfway between the intellect, which sees, and reason, which forms concepts. The philosopher sees but does not demonstrate, as proven by the word itself, *evidence*, which clearly derives from the Latin verb *videre*, "to see". An ancient prejudice insists that philosophy must start from the general and descend into the particular, which is deduction, a method that proceeds by demonstration. Thus was born the opinion that there is no verifiable truth without demonstration. But demonstrating is extremely easy, requiring nothing more than common sense. Thus, to draw truth from objects, the faculty of judgment is needed, a rare quality which very few possess. For this operation, it is necessary to have familiarity with two procedures discussed by Plato and Kant: homogeneity and specification, which consist in grasping from objects the difference between inherent properties and mere resemblances. It is necessary to coordinate and subordinate without making leaps, without leaving gaps, respecting each difference and each resemblance. The demonstrative method is extremely boring: since all particulars are contained in the general, you know from the very first what's coming next. It's like taking the same route around Piazza San Marco every single day. In Schopenhauer's books, on the other hand, you find infinite variety that tickles your curiosity and feels like traveling from one city to another. Furthermore, a philosophy founded on general concepts such as absolute substance, God, infinity, finitude, absolute identity, being, essence, etc., feels farfetched, constructed out of the air, incapable of ever grasping reality. Full of holy disdain, Arthur shoots down Schelling, Hegel, and all the other modern fabricators of concepts.[20] They give you a philosophy of words, whereas he gives a philosophy of things. From his observatory, he thoroughly examines objects, distinguishes the similar from the different, and with his extremely powerful faculty of judgment he is able to draw such unprecedented truths that he leaves you open-mouthed in amazement. And how he scrambles to pound his insights into your mind! He handles them in such a way that each takes the form of a paradox and attracts your attention. If you start to fall asleep, he wakes you up and says, "Look at this erudition! Consider this paradox! Watch and see how clearly I explain Kant to you! I don't just read histories of philosophy, you know, but the original works! And believe me, I came up with all this completely on my own!"

A. Is that true, at least?

[20] *Parerga und Paralipomena*, I; *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung,* II.

D. Kidding aside, it's true. Schopenhauer has uncommon ingenuity: lucid, quick, heated and often very sharp; add to that an extraordinary doctrine. Even if you can't go along with all his judgments, here and there you come across singular insights, learn all kinds of new things, and spend your time with great pleasure, because he is delightful to read. Leopardi reasons with common sense, expresses his ideas familiarly as they come to him, doesn't try to create a big effect, and is excessively modest and sober. The squalor of life that he wanted to represent reflects in his spare prose as in a mirror. His style is like his world, a forbidding desert where you seek a flower in vain. Schopenhauer on the other hand, when he lets his tongue fly, cannot contain himself: he is copious, florid, vivacious, happy. He enjoys pronouncing the bitterest truth, because underneath he is saying, "I came up with this". He gets distracted and distracts you, and in discourse, you often feel you're in the midst of an enjoyable conversation in which, between a cup of tea and a glass of champagne, you declaim on the vanity and wretchedness of life. As a reader, you esteem Leopardi but enjoy Schopenhauer.

A. I see. Leopardi died young, a martyr to his ideas. Schopenhauer goes on dying without ceasing to live.

D. That's nothing but insolence. You're like boys granted too much liberty.

A. You want a monopoly on joking. Long live Schopenhauer for many many years, and may he give us another treatise on '*Wille*'. In fact, I promise you I will study him seriously. I'd like to do a translation of his principle work and propagate it in the kingdom of Naples. I think Campagna would be very glad that his faithful followers dedicate themselves to the contemplative life, take vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and, victims of life, spend their time meditating on death.

D. But if you want your translation to bear fruit, you also have to burn all copies of Leopardi.

A. It seems that Schopenhauer has inoculated you with the disease of paradox. We've said that they both think in the same way.

D. But Leopardi produces an effect contrary to what he proposes. He doesn't believe in progress but makes you desire it; he doesn't believe in freedom, but makes you love it. He calls love, glory, and virtue illusions, but lights a flame of inexhaustible desire for them in your breast. You can't leave him without feeling better, and can't approach him more closely without composing and purifying yourself so as not to blush from shame in his presence. He's a skeptic who makes you a believer, and while he believes it impossible to achieve a shared state less miserable than the current one, he arouses a burning love for it and inspires noble actions to that end. He has a low concept of humanity, but his high, gentle, and pure spirit honors and ennobles it. If destiny had prolonged his life until '48, you would have found him at your side, in comfort and combat. Although as pessimistic and anti-cosmic as Schopenhauer, he

doesn't preach the absurd negation of '*Wille*', unnatural abstention and monkish mortification, a philosophy of otium that would have emasculated Europe to oriental immobility, if freedom and active thought had not conquered Dominican ferocity and Jesuit cunning. Leopardi opposes the passions, but only the bad ones, and even while he says all life is phantoms and error, somehow you mysteriously feel yourself clutch ever more tightly to everything in life that is noble and great. For Leopardi, withdrawal into quietude is cowardice, an abdication of human dignity, while Schopenhauer summons us to an occupation only to maintain one's health. If you want a single example to measure the abyss that divides these two spirits, consider that, for Schopenhauer, the difference between a slave and a free man is more in name than substance, A free man can go from one place to another, but a slave, with a master seeing to his needs, has the advantage of tranquil sleep and living without care.[21] If Leopardi had heard such a statement, he would have blushed in shame that his '*Wille*' was of the same nature as Schopenhauer's.

A. Up to now we've been kidding. Now you make a tragic face.

D. Also, the profound sadness with which Leopardi describes life does not lead us to quietude but rouses desire for the comfort of another solution. If chance or fortune ever brought Schopenhauer to poke around in Italy, Leopardi would have attached himself to his feet like a ball and chain and never let him move.

A. It's getting late, and Schopenhauer has given me an appetite. Since I'm without grace, I am unable to overcome my '*Wille*'. *Addio*.

D. You're leaving me just like that, all this discourse with no conclusion?

A. I'll draw my own conclusion. If you read Leopardi, you have to kill yourself. If you read Schopenhauer, you have to become a monk. If you read all these other modern philosophers, you have to get yourself hanged for love of an idea.

D. I get it. A young man once said to Rousseau, "Lay off the women and study mathematics."

A. You mean that for me it's the opposite: I'll leave mathematics and study women. I want to return to Naples, burn all my philosophy books, and make friends with Campagna. I'll invite him to lunch and we'll have a philosophical conversation about pretty girls. *Addio.*

D. And I'll write my article for the *Contemporary Review*.

1858

[21] *Parerga und Paralipomena*, par. 125.