CHAPTER V

"SCHOPENHAUER AND NIETZSCHE : A COMPARISON"
Nietzsche was at first impressed by Schopenhauer's picture of life and the irrationality of blind Will. But later on in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he took a drastic turn away from Schopenhauer's irrational 'Will to live'. Schopenhauer's 'Will' is blind and has no knowledge of its strivings and goals. Nietzsche gives it a positive drive and arrives at his concept of 'the Will to Power'. Nietzsche does so by an increasing rejection of Schopenhauer's concept of the 'Will to live'.

In Schopenhauer's 'Will to live', Nietzsche finds a negative attitude towards life. He also detects a great danger in Schopenhauer's exaltation of the instincts of pity, self-denial and self-sacrifice.

The whole of Schopenhauer's philosophy aims at release from the will, achieved momentarily in the will-less contemplation of Art or in what Schopenhauer calls 'Nirvana'. Unlike Schopenhauer, Nietzsche sees
no point in denying the Will. He regards such a release from the will as impossible and a total misunderstanding of the meaning of life.

Nietzsche develops his own line of thought and instead of denying life, he strongly affirms it. His idea of redemption has nothing to do with Schopenhauer's aim to be released from the 'Will to live'. He, therefore, rejects Schopenhauer's doctrine of 'Resignation' and the 'Buddhistic doctrine of Nirvana'. Dionysus the Greek god symbolizing chaos and irrationality teaches him the truth of life and in dionysian suffering, Nietzsche finds no trace of redemption. Thus he who calls himself 'Dionysus Disciple' does not believe in Tragedy as a lesson in resignation. With the death of God he fails to find lasting happiness in pure contemplation of a creation deserted by his creator. Nietzsche, therefore, asserts that Tragedy is the antithesis of Buddhistic negation of the Will.

The unsatisfied striving of Schopenhauer's will to life is displayed more closely in man's fight for happiness. Though Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' does not aim at man's happiness, its goal is the perfection of the individual in the Superman. Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' is positive and construc-
tive whereas Schopenhauer's is both negative and destructive.

Schopenhauer's Will is not at first hampered by anything and so it rushes forward without any aim. But at a certain stage, this wild rush is suddenly obstructed by the intellect which, according to him, is the product of the Will. Ultimately the Will's progress is halted and it then denies itself. By so doing, it makes man a 'Will-less subject' of knowledge.

Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' on the other hand is not obstructed by anything although at times it has been delayed by some resistance. It thus rushes forth and is always dynamic. In its course, pleasure and displeasure are its regular attendants. Displeasure cannot check the Will's forward march, for the Will finds pleasure in resistance. Thus in Nietzsche's Will, pleasure consists not in reaching the goal but in overcoming a resistance.

Nietzsche cannot accept Schopenhauer's view that the 'Will to life' is a thing-in-itself. He finds no 'things-in-themselves' for according to him, 'Will to Power' is the only inner substance of being. He also does not find any plurality of the Will but
he is convinced that all individual wills are nothing but manifestations of the 'Will to Power'.

Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche agree that will is the core of life. But both 'Will to Live' and 'Will to Power' are victims of some other powers. Schopenhauer's Will becomes a victim of the intellect, for, the moment intellect intervenes, Will steps down and denies itself. Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' is also limited for inspite of its dynamic force, it can never re-visit the past. It is handicapped because although it can always move forward, it fails to retrace its steps to the past.

Schopenhauer's Will fails to recover its lost position and so has to deny itself. Nietzsche on the other hand uses the Will's limitation as a stimulus to power and more power, to complete its aim in the strong man or the 'Overman'.

Schopenhauer is pessimistic in his outlook and his pessimism is deep rooted in the ugliness of life. In his examination of reality, he sees only pain and suffering and this convinces him that reality is nothing but evil. Hindu Philosophy also stresses the presence of evil in the world, but even Buddhism which is considered to be the most pessimistic
system of Indian thought believes that evil can be eliminated if desire can be exterminated and destroyed.

Like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche is also conscious of the presence of evil in the universe and he also accepts the tragic nature of man. But he is not at all discouraged by the dismal picture of life for he points out:

no pain has been able or shall be able to tempt me into giving false testimony about life as I recognise it\(^69\).

Nietzsche does not agree with Schopenhauer that life is essentially evil. So instead of lamenting over man's unsuccessful lot, Nietzsche is ready to face life in its totality. His dionysian message does not encourage man to flee from life but the central theme of the message encourages us to say 'yes' to life. Inspite of the boulders and sharp winds of misery, Nietzsche is inspired to preach the message of encouragement for he is supported by the wish that man should not will death. Thus,

according to him, the ultimate aim of man should, therefore, be to attain power and more and more power.

The god Dionysus transforms despair into bliss of ultimate acceptance. As Dionysus' devotee, Nietzsche does not want man to run away from life or watch it like an idle spectator. He is greatly impressed by Greek tragedy for it poses the problem of one who reacts to adversity and death.

Christianity witnesses life's despair and preaches the equality of men before God. Nietzsche does not believe in this equality and he also finds fault with Schopenhauer's cosmic will. He believes in the individual will and its achievement of power. He has no doubt that this individual 'Will' will ultimately reach its zenith in the Overman. Nietzsche thus believes that the individual has the possibility of achieving the full stature of the Superman. Man, he believes, can reach this goal only if he can fight against the greatest hurdle which is the overcoming of the self with all its passion and impulses. Nietzsche insists that the strong man loves power and affirms the will to live. He asserts that it is the happy duty of the indivi-
dual to be strong and aggressive. He is of the view that the negative and passive attitude of Schopenhauer's individual is based on weakness. Nietzsche makes it clear that he expects the Superman to control the unruly desires and to direct the 'Will to Power' to the enlightenment of man. He believes that man is the master of fate and with exertion can free himself from pain and suffering. Man must according to him:

beget the Superman, to whom all races will contribute the blood of his body and the latent powers of his soul, and who will be a more splendid instrument of the Will to Power and temple of the risen Dionysus . . . The Superman will be magnanimous . . . His strength will be . . . the strength of daring to live completely . . . shrinking from nothing, undaunted by nothing that can befall him.\(^70\).

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche speaks of his period of Schopenhauerian pessimism -- 'all life had I renounced, so I dreamed'. But the very

of the world weary is rejected by him. He comes to
the conclusion that denial of the will cannot and
does not solve life's problem. Nietzsche views the
world as a battle ground in which every element
seeks for dominance over others. The problem can,
according to him, be solved only by overcoming it.
Man must, therefore, play his role as a god to
achieve his goal by overcoming it.

Nietzsche's challenge is to overcome
Schopenhauerian pessimism. His opinion is that
man should accept reality for what it is. He re-
affirms life with the creation of Art. He is
convinced that his 'Will to Power' reveals itself
in the working of the Universe and this is the work
of the artist giving shape to himself.

The two philosophers -- Schopenhauer and
Nietzsche arrive at the theory of Art, through their
theory of the 'Will'. But because Nietzsche affirms
life and Schopenhauer negates it, their interpreta-
tions of Tragedy vastly differ.

Schopenhauer asserts the value of pity, of
self-denial and self-sacrifice in tragedy. Nietzsche
rejects this view of Schopenhauer and in its place
he sees strength, joy and affirmation of life. Thus
there is a world of difference between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche for the one preaches:

confirmitity, denial, ascetism, the
other rebellion, affirmation,
strength and action . . .
Schopenhauer emphasises the suffer­
ing and misery of existence and
represents life as evil and desirable.
Nietzsche on the contrary represents
life as good . . . desirable: he calls
not for less life, for not -- being,
for Nirvana -- but for more life, more
vigorous life, more joyful life.\(^71\).

Although the idea of the 'Will' and the role it
plays in knowledge is one of Nietzsche's views,
Schopenhauer can still be recognised as the origi­
nator of the doctrine of 'Will'.

Another point which supports this fact is
that Nietzsche's doctrine of 'affirmation' or
'yea saying' to life is not his own but Aeschylus.
Nietzsche's view was certainly strengthened by his
study of the Greek dramatist.

\(^71\) Frederich Copleston, Friedrich Nietzsche,
Aeschylus perceived the mystery of suffering in life. What he witnessed in the world was the working of unknown powers binding man to pain and disaster. Life was for him a perilous adventure and he realised that men were not made for safe havens. He considered life or existence as a challenge, for there was that in man which could alter his fate and turn defeat into triumph. In the works of a man with this insight and heroic temper, tragedy was born and in his hands it showed man's misery in its darkest and his grandeur at his best.

Aeschylus' heroes like Prometheus are not afraid to face life. Man is only a play thing in the hands of powerful gods. He is the victim of their sport. Yet in spite of all his sufferings and unhappy lot he refuses to bow his head. He desires with all his power to be man and to remain so. In spite of his misery he does not want to change places with the gods and is dead against the spirit of resignation.

Up to this point, Nietzsche agrees with Aeschylus without ascribing to Aeschylus' view that God is responsible for the mystery of unreserved suffering. It is here that Nietzsche turns to
Schopenhauer and accepts his doctrine of the 'Will'. Thus in his hands, the Christian God has been replaced by a new force called 'Will'.

Schopenhauer sees no reasonableness in the world for its basis, according to him, is irrational and tragic. Christianity too holds the view that there is something wrong at the base which cannot be put to right by man's reason. This view finds its powerful expression in the life and undeserved suffering of Job. Job has found out that at the core, life is tragic and not logical.

Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Job would seem to accept the tragic fact that there is suffering in the world, but they fail to perceive and explain the 'why' of it.

As already seen, for Schopenhauer it is the blessed state of contemplation in which tragedy must culminate whereas for Nietzsche it must lead to the emergence of the Dionysian man whose sole drive consists in his indomitable will. Such a man will have full control over his passions. He can thus face life with all its sufferings and live it fully. Thus according to Nietzsche, it is the duty of Art to transform, affirm, bless and deify man's existence. Nietzsche's Superman resembles Christ who
like him exemplifies a life which can overcome all passions, impulses and selfishness.

It is true that in later years, Nietzsche was against Schopenhauer's pessimistic doctrine of blind unmeaningful will. But though he tried very hard to construct a positive doctrine out of that blank negation, he never got the poison out of his blood. It is probable too, that his careful use of language is partly due to the influence of Schopenhauer. The Birth of Tragedy shows the sign of the influence of Schopenhauer's philosophy of 'Will' and 'Art'. Thus Nietzsche applies Schopenhauer's philosophy to his own metaphysical interpretation of Tragedy. Nietzsche also follows Schopenhauer in believing that an artist to be able to transform horrid reality into a thing of beauty must be liberated from the individual 'Will'.

Thomas Mann Buddenbrooks demonstrates the inseparability of the ideas of the two philosophers. Buddenbrooks presents a Schopenhauerian plot based on a view of life which combines Nietzsche's affirmation of the will and Schopenhauer's denial of it in a consistent whole. Thus Thomas Mann's novel:

now gives and now withdraws its assent to Schopenhauer's condemnation
of the will, and now welcomes, and now refutes Nietzsche's advocacy of life\(^72\).

Nietzsche may affirm life as the 'Will to Power'. But this 'Will to Power' is not different from Schopenhauer's 'Will to Live' and both these wills are basically blind. Copleston is, therefore, right when he points out that although these two philosophers have different views of life, they are as two brothers who are unlike in temperament yet spring from a common parentage . . . \(^73\).

In their views of Art too, Nietzsche understands Art as the great stimulant to life. Schopenhauer on the other hand understands it as the quietive that calms life in its wretchedness and suffering.

Nietzsche considers *The Birth of Tragedy* a significant contribution to the Science of Aesthetics, an attempt to understand Art in the terms of strongest human drive. And it will not be

\(^72\) Erich Heller, *Thomas Mann: The Ironic German*, op. cit. p. 54.

\(^73\) Frederick Copleston, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, op. cit. p. 158.
an exaggeration to suggest that aesthetics in the
Nietzschean sense has its beginning in the philosop­
hy of Schopenhauer.

A comparative study of the two prominent
thinkers enables one to have a glimpse into their
philosophy of life. The two great Philosophers --
Schopenhauer and Nietzsche have contributed new
ideas to the science of aesthetics. By trying to
understand their philosophical views, a student of
literature will gain a new insight into their
thoughts.

From times immemorial, man has been always
cowed down by the tragic picture of the world and
the sad lot of humanity at large. But both
Schopenhauer and Nietzsche have disclosed the
secret that there is in Art, a panacea which helps
man evade or overcome the miseries of life. Goethe
too, in Mathew Arnold's 'Memorial Verses' knew
quite well the ills and sufferings of his age and he
advised the people to take shelter in Art in order
to avoid disaster. But this escape from life's
tragedy is short-lived, for the question of eliminating
pain and suffering from the world is just impossible.
Scientists and Artists may come out with their new
ideas, but no one can prescribe a permanent remedy to
relieve man's sad lot and misery from the world.

Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's prescriptions to evade or overcome pain cannot give man a lasting relief from sufferings. Schopenhauer's "contemplation" can only give him a short-lived relief for no one can ever remain in that state for a long period of time.

Nietzsche's view too cannot be accepted for man will have to wait for the Superman to appear who alone with his dionysian spirit can say 'yea' to life's suffering.

Shakespeare through King Lear expresses the fact that "nothing comes of nothing". It therefore, requires a genius to transform nothing into something. In this respect, Schopenhauer may be considered a genius and an artist, for out of his pessimism, art is born. His genius also matches the irrationality of his will for when he finds it unreasoned and senseless, he also does away with either logic or argument. With the clever stroke of his genius, he helps the mind to take a leap into the world of its own. This world is, according to him, the world of contemplation where the mind experiences pure bliss.
It is also very inspiring to note the dynamic spirit of Nietzsche. Out of his experience of loneliness, despair and the general tragedy of life he succeeds in developing a philosophy of hope and he teaches others not to despair but to affirm life with all its sufferings. For as he puts it:

man's life must be built on the further side of despair rather than on the far sight of a mythical paradise. 74

Nietzsche sees man as the master of his own fate and Art as the means by which man changes the horrid reality of life into a thing of beauty and pleasure. It is in this way that Art helps life to triumph over death and enables man to achieve victory over suffering and tragedy. Art, according to Nietzsche enabled the Greek to look at life as a pleasurable game.

Man is both looked upon as a creator and a creation for he can contemplate life and is able to justify it as an aesthetic phenomenon.

Nietzsche's Superman is one who can sublimate his sensual drives into Art by blending the spirit of

Dionysus and Apollo. Also man's awareness of himself as the creator stops him from despairing at life's tragedy but helps him accept life unconditionally.

Schopenhauer's pessimism is like a cold bleak winter but although lacking in warmth, it has a charm of its own. Nietzsche's optimism on the other hand, is like a scorching sun but differs from Browning's. Browning's optimism is in part an expression of his happy life, in part based on his faith in the power of love, human as well as divine. Browning's joy affirms 'God's in his heaven' and 'all's right with the world'.

Nietzsche asserts the death of God, and so his joy is a force which comes out of immense despair and helps him erect 'his sunny dome on the caves of ice'.

For a long time, Aristotle's theory of tragedy had capture the minds of the critics. But Nietzsche and Schopenhauer opened a new window to see Tragedy in a new light. Not only do their theories of Tragedy broaden the outlook of the readers, but they can also for sometime transport man away from the mundane life with its care, misery, suffering and pain.

Ibid., p. 185.