

The essence of the world as an experience of aesthetic contemplation in Arthur Schopenhauer

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Abstract— This article analyzes the constitution of the metaphysics of the beautiful in the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer present in the book *The world as will and as representation*. Therefore, an exposition of the theoretical foundations of the metaphysics of the Will is made, and then the steps that comprise all the pessimism characteristic of the author's thought are examined, and thus understand how these contribute to the composition of aesthetic contemplation. Thus, a bibliographical research on the theme will be carried out, aiming to understand how these conceptions contribute to the aesthetic experience, analyzing the main concepts and particularities of the ideas of the German philosopher.

I. INTRODUCTION

Aesthetics is the area of philosophy that develops appreciation for beauty and how we perceive it. Historically, we see that in the eighteenth century was introduced into philosophy by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten as a discipline. In the previous sense, it is possible to observe that works such as Cicero's *Rhetoric*, Horace's *Poetic Art* and Aristotle's *Poetics* are inscribed in the field of aesthetics even before the word, because they set rules of production. In the nineteenth century, under the voice of Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy, the meaning of the discipline gains another contour and as a definition, escapes any determined effect, refusing any idea of duty. This conception is founded by the *Will*, the essence of the world. In other words, the problem of aesthetics in the nineteenth century, being deciphered by the German philosopher consists in the definition that the beautiful depends on the certainty of a knowledge, being intuitive and that it can not be satisfied with the concept of perfection.

Thus, the problem of the foundation of Schopenhauerian aesthetics in this study will deal with the meaning mentioned above: the definition of *Will*, on the one hand, to understand which aspect of the essential nature of the world comes from the pain and suffering inherent to the subject. And in another perspective, understand what motivates us to act to escape such a condition and to what theoretical alternative we can turn. These two references are gathered in Schopenhauer's approach, located in his work par excellence *The world as will and as a representation* of 1819. Most of our interest will be focused on the debate between the *Will* as the essence of the world and art as a temporary satisfaction of man's suffering, which is influenced by platonic *ideas* in contemplative aesthetics. Thus, the knowledge of its metaphysical system is assumed. Therefore, we will refer, whenever necessary, to Schopenhauer's epistemic and metaphysical ideas that will be useful for understanding the metaphysics of the beautiful.

The presentation dedicated to the exposure of Schopenhauer's aesthetic thought was developed taking

into account some methodological assumptions that should be noted. The understanding of the meaning of the metaphysics of beauty cannot be obtained without the recognition of the metaphysics of the *Will*, that is, the proposal of contemplation of art is based on the unique and true essence present in all its philosophy. Our reading of the introduction of the metaphysics of the beautiful will seek to follow this methodological orientation of taking art as part of a broader system.

Moreover, it is important that we recognize that platonic *ideas* serve as a backdrop for the foundation of Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory, elevated to a state of knowledge of the world that from the philosopher's perspective competed with the sciences and surpassed them, taking into account satisfaction, as well as the metaphysical joy it provides. Finally, the objectification of the *Will* as a means of pure intuition for the fine arts and their various degrees of knowledge, accentuating music as independent art and having immediate access to this principle, not making concessions to *idea* for this. Therefore, the focus of this research is on Schopenhauer's aesthetic contemplation, because with this establishes another form of world knowledge, in addition to what was established by the philosophical tradition, always emphasizing the true essence of life, the *Will*.

II. THE METAPHYSICS OF THE WILL

To talk about Schopenhauer's aesthetics, we must first address the main concepts developed by the philosopher in his main work: *The world as a will and as a representation*. Published in 1819, the production has as its greatest merit to spark a discussion about the irrational and unconscious. A clear answer is the rationalist tradition of Western philosophy, which gained strength in the eighteenth century with the Transcendental Idealism of Immanuel Kant and with the advent of German Idealism¹, under the voice of the ideas of so-called systematic idealistic philosophers: Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. As Lefranc (2005, p. 20) points out, "Schopenhauer's philosophy is consciously and explicitly a philosophy of artist, writer, a philosophy that seeks to break with the specialized language of the great teachers of idealism". That said, it is important to emphasize that the background of the philosophy of the author of Dantzig is metaphysical pessimism, and from this understanding we will observe a distinct direction throughout his line of thought.

¹ German Idealism arose from Romanticism, which raised the overcoming of the Enlightenment. In addition, originated in the post-Kantian period in Fichte, Schelling and had its continuity with Hegel. Such a philosophy was a transcendental, subjective and absolute denomination.

In the first tome of the book *The world as a will and as a representation*, Schopenhauer presents bluntly the maxim that will characterize his entire philosophy, as we see in the following passage:

'The world is my representation': - this is a truth that is valid in relation to every being who lives and knows, although only the human being can bring it to the reflected and abstract consciousness: and indeed it does, then philosophical clairvoyance arises in it. It becomes clear and certain to him that he knows no sun or any Earth, but always only an eye that sees a Sun, a hand that touches the earth; that the world around him exists only as a representation, that is, only in relation to others, the one who represents himself (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p. 3).

A priori, it is emphasized that representation indicates something placed (*Stellung*) before (*Vor*). This presupposes a subject who intuit. We can understand, then, what representation is the world, the starting point of our perceptual acts. It is corresponding to the Kantian phenomenon, being subjected to three conditions: space, time and causality. All dependent on understanding and grouped form the *principle of sufficient reason*. Thus, "[...] what exists for knowledge, therefore for the whole world, is only an object in relation to the subject, intuition of those who intuit, in a word, representation" (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p.3). As Barboza (2003, p. 10) approaches, "from data from abroad, understanding, so to speak, manufactures objects, as if it were a craftsman, when considering this data an effect, from which it seeks its cause and, in it, places it in space as a figure". In this sense, the consideration developed by Schopenhauer is that all existing objects even the body itself are representations.

On the other hand, to clarify what abstraction is, Schopenhauer complements the world as a representation through the *Will*, which corresponds to another prism of his philosophy. According to his words: "[...] what is exposed as representation both in their actions and in their permanent substrate, the body, is the Will, which constitutes the most immediate of our consciousness" (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p.128). Of course, we are dealing with what Kant called *thin-in-itself*, and precisely by this circumstance that led Schopenhauer to call himself the continuer of his work².

² In his main appendix, in the appendix dedicated to the critique of Kantian philosophy, Schopenhauer says: "People begin to realize that true and serious philosophy is still there where Kant left it. In any case, I do not recognize that something has happened in philosophy between him and me: therefore, I immediately connect with him" (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p. 483).

That said, it is understood that the *Will* is the fundamental instance of Schopenhauer's thought, as we will see in the following excerpt, it establishes a legitimate role of protagonism to the concept, envisioning it in all aspects of life:

You will recognize the same will as the most intimate essence not only of appearances entirely similar to yours, that is, humans and animals, but continued reflection will lead you to recognize that also the force that vegetate and guess in the plant, yes, the force that forms the crystal, which rotates the magnetic needle to the north pole, which erupts from the shock of two heterogeneous metals, which appears in the elective affinities of materials such as attraction and repulsion, yes, the very gravity that acts powerfully in all matter, attracting the stone to the earth and the Earth to the Sun, - all this is different only in appearance, but according to its essence itself and to recognize itself as it known immediately in such an intimate and better way than anything else and that, where it appears more clearly, it's called Will. (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p. 128).

Thus, the author's demonstration illustrates the strength that the concept holds within in the nature of life. In view of this, it is important to emphasize that appearance is representation, whatever, on the other hand, the Kantian concept called *thing-in-itself* is the *Will*, the core of each particular, as well as of the whole, and that is exactly why it acquires a cosmological status. This is because it appears in every force of nature that takes effect blindly, in this regard Safransky (2012) comments that the Being that Schopenhauer discovered was a (*Blinder Wille*), vital and opaque, and did not nod to common sense, much less presented the slightest design, the Being simply is. With the *Will*, Schopenhauer surpassed the figures of the ancient metaphysics, because it goes in opposition to the philosophical tradition from Plato to Descartes, who intended to achieve a transcendent reality through a cognitive instance. The Schopenhauerian metaphysics, on the contrary, penetrates into the heart of the experience to reach its innermost core, because it is necessary to understand the knowledge that each has of his or her will. Finally, we can understand that the *Will* has a status as the central nucleus of life, is the essence of the world and has three fundamental characteristics: unity, ungroundability and unknowability.

In view of this, we will see how in particular aspects in schopenhauerian aesthetics the *Will* takes the path of pessimism coming from wanting to live present in ideas.

III. METAPHYSICAL PESSIMISMO

In the previous section, we indicate the main concepts worked by Schopenhauer in his main work, and which, as we know, guide all his thinking throughout his life. From this, we need to present ideas that are fundamental to his aesthetic theory. It is worth mentioning that the *Will* and Representation as we have seen has its own characteristics, the first because it is entirely free, and the second in turn is governed by necessity, that is, each object presented as a phenomenon is absolutely necessary, rejecting the possibility of freedom in the field of representation. Of this, the particular pessimism of the German philosopher is the starting point for understanding that the metaphysical dimension is directed by ends, producing a series of objects of desire and needs. As Dalcol (2014, p.31) points out, "Thus, we are inserted in this mode of existence, marked daily by the search and satisfaction of our desires". This is determined by the lack, that is, lack. In this regard Jair Barboza, comments that:

[...] even if the desires being satisfied, against each one who was there are at least ten who are not: when a desire is satisfied, soon a new one takes its place. Satisfied desire is a known error and the new, an error still unknown. There is no lasting satisfaction, but each resembles the alms giving that is given today to the beggar, making his life less miserable, yet prologando his torment tomorrow. Nothing makes the person effectively happy. Pleasure is only a momentary end of pain (BARBOZA, 2003, p.14).

Taking these aspects into account, we can affirm that selfishness is inherent to the *Will*, conditioned by wanting to live, and feeds the ends to be pursued. According to Redyson (2009, p.50), "Schopenhauer's concept of "want-to-live" seems to fit into an "ontology of annihilation" of beings. According to these indications, it would be to consider a counterposition between metaphysics and human finitude that would actually be found". Thus, if desires are not satisfied, boredom arises, if they take time, the distressing need follows. There is no state of perfection or stillness. The *Will* being insatiable, presents a movement of infinity, suffering, thus, is continuous. It is also subordinated to selfishness personified by individualism. Therefore, we can understand that our receptivity to pain is almost infinite, but it does not occur the same with our openness to pleasure, because the subject is surrounded by a mesh of limits. Thus, we see that schopenhauerian philosophy is

drawn by a metaphysic pessimism³, based on the will of the *Will*, being immanent.

However, dantzig's thinker in search of a state that could achieve momentary satisfaction and move away from the pain caused by incessant wanting, resorts to aesthetic contemplation, since such a state is defined as that of intuition of undying archetypes of things, the same *Ideas* exposed in nature as a species. Given the above, we will highlight the particular aspects of the metaphysics of the beautiful in the following topic.

IV. METAPHYSICS OF THE BEAUTIFUL

As discussed earlier, Schopenhauer's entire philosophy is developed based on the work *The world as will and as representation*. Taking into account this aspect, the metaphysics of the beautiful, in the III book of this manuscript, characterizes aesthetic contemplation as a high state of knowledge of the world, which overcomes and competes with the sciences, taking into account the satisfaction and metaphysical joy. That said, we can say that schopenhauerian aesthetics has an emphasis on contemplating *Ideas*⁴ as a fundamental condition of artistic activity. It is worth mentioning that in this instance the objectification of the Will is important, as the German philosopher comments: "[...] we name the world seen as a representation, both in its whole and in its parts, OBJECTIVITY OF THE WILL, that is, the will that became an object, that is, that became representation" (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p. 195). When analyzing this instance, we see that the objectification of the Will has specific degrees and in essence appears in the representation, with clarity and perfection, and exposes itself as an object.

It can be affirmed that because of this, the object occurs in itself and by itself as an objectified *Will*, being this natural or made by the human hand. According to Lefranc (2005), in the experience of beauty, it is so much said that the object is seized as an idea or that it exists freely in itself. On the other hand, we see Plato's influence on Schopenhauer's aesthetic conception, because when it comes to the degrees of objectification these are given through the *Idea*, due to the immutability, forms and properties originating from both organic and inorganic

bodies. Thus, in line with what the philosopher of antiquity conceived, it is understood that in all Ideas there are countless individuals and singular appearances, reproduced as copies, simulacrum present in the sensitive world. It is also pertinent to comment that the plurality of these individuals can only be represented through time, space and causality, contained in the principle of reason. But it is worth mentioning that "[...] the Idea, on the contrary, does not submit to this principle, therefore it does not fit plurality or change" (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p. 196). Therefore, it remains unchanged, and resides completely outside the sphere of knowledge of the individual, is unique. What is unique, and it is up to the subject belongs to the *principle of individuation*, which comprises two thirds of the *principle of sufficient reason*, that is, time and space. That is exactly why, what is one and similar in essence and in its concept appears to us as different, both in coexistence and in succession.

Art is a mode of knowledge that considers the essential and remains in the world, is independent and external to any relationship. Therefore, it is the true content of phenomena not subjected to change, known through *Ideas*, objectified and immediate of the *thing-in-itself*, that is, the *Will*, is the work of genius. In addition to this aspect, it reproduces the Ideas conceived by pure contemplation, and going according to this matter of reproduction can be plastic art, poetry or music. For this reason, Schopenhauer comments that in this contrary to science there is a pure satisfaction, as we see in the following passage:

Science follows the endless and unceasing torrent of the various forms of foundation and consequence: with each end achieved it is again thrown further, never being able to find an end goal or a complete satisfaction, in the same way as one cannot, running, // reach the point where the clouds touch the horizon line; art, on the contrary, finds everywhere its end (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p. 213).

From this consideration we can understand that the *Idea* is independent of the *principle of reason*. Thus, the brilliant mode of consideration for its characteristic of pure contemplation escapes this principle, is what is worth and helps in art. It should also be noted that the essence of genius consists in the outstanding capacity for such artistic abstraction. The justification for this lies in the fact that only he is capable of a complete forgetfulness of the person himself and his relationships. This means that genius is more perfect objectivity, ability to proceed in a purely intuitive way, while being lost in intuition, leaves aside one's own interest, want and ends, that is, leaves knowledge originated by the *Will*.

³ Thomas Mann, a German novelist, argues that Schopenhauer was at the same time the philosopher of will and pessimism, for the two things are one, so he says: "If we see it as the opposite of beata satisfaction, the will is in itself a fundamental unhappiness: it is dissatisfaction, effort in view of something, intelligence, burning sea, greed, desire, suffering, and a world of will can be nothing but the world of suffering" (MANN, 2015, p. 8).

⁴ Schopenhauer's thesis aims to bring together the Platonic Idea and the Kantian thing-in-si.

As a result, the personality moves away for a while, leaving only the pure subject he knows. According to Barboza (1997), for genius to enter the scene in an individual a degree of faculty of knowledge goes beyond the servitude of the *Will*, becoming free. Therefore, the subject becomes a purification of the *Will*, mirror of the essence of the world. Thus, we see that the theory of genius in Schopenhauer is the means by which art receives its metaphysical meaning beyond the satisfaction of desires. All men, to some degree, are able to recognize their *Ideas* in things, and thereby renounce their personality for a moment. Genius, therefore, has the advantage of the much higher degree and the longer duration of that way of knowledge, has the ability to reproduce and as we note the art is in definition the ability to reproduce.

Because of this aspect, we can approach the hierarchies of art. For, when remembering aesthetic intuition, that is, when genius produces a work, it does so through the *Idea*. And as we know, art is an exhibition of *Ideas*, a reminder of what exists in the intelligible world. This means that "[...] this exhibition implies reference to the degrees of objectification of the will, there is a hierarchy of arts corresponding to the hierarchy of Ideas" (BARBOZA, 2003, p. 15). Therefore, it should be emphasized that this order does not concern the same arts, but rather the theme they present. Given this, we will see how they rank.

The architecture corresponds to gravity, cohesion, resistance, hardness of materials, reaction against light, and is incorporated in schopenhauerian aesthetics because it presents in the constructions the most elementary ideas of objectification of the *Will*. Then we have gardening and landscape painting, both working with *ideas* in the plant kingdom. Later comes the sculpture and painting of animals, thus being surpassed by the sculptures and paintings of men. Of this, in a privileged place is poetry, because it comprises the exhibition of the *Idea* in which the *Will* reaches its highest objectification. As the German philosopher describes in the following passage:

Ideas are essentially intuitive: if, however, in poetry only abstract concepts are communicated immediately by words, it is, however, clear that the intention is, through the representatives of these concepts, to allow the listener to intuit the Ideas of life, which is only possible with the help of fantasy itself (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p. 280).

Poetry is thus the art that allows the materialization of imagination through the word. It is the manifestation of the *Idea* corresponding to the higher degree of objectivity of the *Will*, the exposure of human beings in the concatenated series of their efforts and actions. Still in this

sense, it is worth mentioning that Schopenhauer gives the genre of tragedy⁵ the privilege of being the most perfect and rich art, since it presents an element of existential pessimism, that is, it approaches what it means by *Will*. This aspect is corroborated in the following passage: "The only essence of tragedy is the exposition of great unhappiness" (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p. 294). Given the above, we will then approach music, which occupies a privileged place among all fine arts.

V. MUSIC: ART PAR EXCELLENCE

Arthur Schopenhauer separates the music of the other arts, the reason for this is due to the fact that in it we do not find copy or repetition of some *Idea* of beings in the world. It conceives it, thus, as high and majestic art. Which leads him to argue that this is capable of making the most powerful aesthetic effect on the most intimate of the human being. So, that considers it as a universal language, whose clarity surpasses even the intuitive world. Jair Barboza (2003) comments that music produces all degrees of objectification of the *Will*, and that is exactly why Schopenhauer deals with the effect it is producing in a serious and profound way. For, musical art has the intimate essence of the world and of ourselves. Thus, as the German thinker establishes:

From the analogy with the other arts we can conclude that music, in a way, has to be for the world as the exhibition for the above, the copy to the model, because its effect is in the whole similar to that of the other arts, but more vigorous, faster, more necessary and infallible. Also its copying relationship with the world has to be quite intimate, infinitely true and precise, since it is understood instantly by anyone and makes known a certain infallibility in the fact that its form is subject to certain rules expressed in numbers, from which it can not deviate completely from being music (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, 297).

Thus, Schopenhauer's understanding of music is an art that has the privilege of overcoming Ideas, it is completely independent of the apparent world, for this reason it understands that "[...] it could to some extent

⁵ Schopenhauer three genres of tragedy employed by the poet: what occurs through extraordinary wickedness that touches the extreme limits of possibility, attributed to a single being, examples: Richard III, Iago in Othello, Shylok in the Merchant of Venice, Fedra of Euripides, Creon in Antigone. The unhappiness produced by blind destiny, that is, chance and error, for example: Oedipus King of Sophocles, between the modern Romeo and Juliet, Tancredo de Voltaire. And finally, the mere mutual disposition of people, by the combination of their reciprocal relations. That is, it originates easily and by itself from human actions and characters.

exist even if the world did not exist – something it could not say of other arts" (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p. 298). In understanding this conception, the important thing to fix is that such art is an immediate objectification and copy of all *will*, mirroring the world as it is, as well as ideas. Therefore, music is a copy of the *Will*, because of this, the effect it has is more powerful and penetrating, because it speaks of the essence of the world.

It is of fundamental importance to understand the reference of music as the true essence of things because the melody refers to an action, event and environment. And this means that, it reveals to us the most secret meaning of ourselves, directly affects the inner life. Thus, it transports us to a level of immersion in which we see in front of us all the possible events of life and the world, because it exposes to every physicist the metaphysical, for all appearance the *thing-in-itself*. In this way, it is through music that we see the intimate essence, the in itself of every appearance, the *Will* as it is. This aspect is pertinent to Schopenhauer, because musical art does not express this or that particular feeling, but the feelings themselves, as highlighted in the following passage:

Music expresses, therefore, // is not either that particular and determined joy, this or that affliction, or pain, or astonishment, or rejoicing, or rejoicing, or tranquility of spirit, but themselves, that is, joy, affliction, pain, astonishment, joy, rejoicing, tranquility of spirit, to some extent in abstract, the essential of them, without accessories, so also without your motives. And yet we fully understand it in this purified quintessence (SCHOPENHAUER, 2015, p. 302).

For this reason, the art of tones raises and awakens fantasy so easily. On another circumstance, we see that Schopenhauer confers the symphony a more dignified expression than that of the opera, because it makes music a mere means of the expression of words, whereas because it is instrumental, as well as the concert and sonatas, the symphony occupies an essentially intimate and free space in the world. Only a few geniuses, such as Mozart and Rossini, succeeded in the German thinker's vision to overcome obstacles imposed by the other arts in music, not to sing were his preferences in the art of melody. Therefore, from what had been exposed, we see that aesthetic knowledge is intuitive when it comes to *Ideas*, and non-intuitive immediacy when it comes to music, in other words, provides a disinterested pleasure and maintains with the world a relationship of representation.

However, it is important to mention that this knowledge of aesthetic life, does not provide the pain relief inherent in our reality, it is an occasional consolation. Moreover, according to Schopenhauer, ethical

life is clarified by compassion and quietism, recurrent from the influence of Eastern philosophy, are steps where the individual can eliminate the *will's* desire altogether by reaching the stage of nirvana.

VI. CONCLUSION

As can be seen, in the eighteenth century we owe the invention of Aesthetics as a recognized and autonomous philosophical discipline. As Matos (2001, p. 66) states, "Until then, poetry, painting, sculpture, music were thought of in different domains of knowledge, but from that moment on, all arts began to be examined from a synthetic perspective". Thus, these were incorporated into the same principle. And in the case of Schopenhauerian thought, built on the metaphysics of the *Will*.

Thus, we begin this work by presenting the foundation of the metaphysics of Arthur Schopenhauer's *Will*. This demonstration, as we affirm, involves the author's entire thought structure and how we expose it, directly linked to metaphysical pessimism. He states that, from the point of view of nature, aesthetics is linked to the eternal *Ideas* present in the essence of the world, and as copies, are exposed as phenomena. In other words, they are subjected to the objectification of the *Will*, a condition that comes from the *principle of sufficient reason*. In the author's opinion, aesthetics is not a set of school precepts, nor even a prescriptive discipline. It is, first of all, an understanding that the beautiful expresses through the Platonic *Idea* and that through art, it frees the individual, even momentarily from the pain caused by the incessant want-to-live. In this sense, the particular assumptions of aesthetic understanding were highlighted, such as wanting, satisfaction and boredom. Founding cycle for suffering in the world, and cause of constant human pain.

We tried, by exposing this path, to describe the particularity inherent to genius, which, unlike other men, reaches high levels of aesthetic contemplation and in the production of art, which are reproduction of the *ideas* or immediate objectivity of the *Will*. This theory was formulated to understand what Schopenhauer understands by fine arts: architecture, gardening, sculpture, painting, poetry and music. All thought from particular conceptions of the concept of *Idea*. However, a particular art occupies a privileged place in the aesthetic philosophical thought of the author: music.

He conceives it through direct communication with the essence of the world, to know, at *Will*. The clarity of this point takes the approach of the aesthetics of melody as a universal and completely independent language, so its effect is more powerful and penetrating. It is also worth mentioning that the art in Schopenhauer's thought reaches temporary levels of pain suspension, and it is still

necessary to ascend ethical life, by the path of compassion by placing oneself in the place of the other, valuing the direction of experience and finally, that of ascesis, where the individual would reach a level for complete denial of the *Will*, idea influenced by Eastern philosophy.

Therefore, we intend to show in the development of this work the elements in favor of Schopenhauer's proposal in defense of the aesthetic foundation based on the metaphysic pessimism of his philosophy of the *Will*. It involves on the one hand the escape from the pain caused by want-to-live and on the other, the contemplation of the beautiful in art. Finally, we show that Schopenhauer's aesthetic is grounded by his entire structure of thought, which he kept faithful throughout his life, and that together the Platonic *Idea* found space to develop a unique aesthetic theoretical field.

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