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Schopenhauer: Sociedade e Cultura

On the logic of Schopenhauerian pessimism: a layout of his argumentative plan and directions for a critical analysis[1]

Sobre a lógica do pessimismo schopenhaueriano: um layout de seu plano argumentativo e encaminhamentos para uma análise crítica

Matheus Silva Freitas[I]

[I] Universidade Federal de Sergipe, São Cristóvão, SE, Brasil

ABSTRACT

Arthur Schopenhauer is predominantly considered a kind of arch-pessimist and founder of the movement classified as "modern philosophical pessimism," due to his innovative claim to maintain, in a systematic way and on "objective reasons," that non-being is better than being. However, two other groups of scholars follow different directions. One of them does not deny Schopenhauer's pessimism but attributes it especially to subjective reasons, such as his melancholic behavior. The other group does not even consider Schopenhauer as a pessimist, but, on the contrary, as an optimist, an indication that we lack clear and explicit criteria for understanding what Schopenhauerian pessimism would be. I argue that there is, indeed, a pessimistic logic objectively articulated within Schopenhauer's philosophy, and that therefore we must examine Schopenhauerian pessimism according to the philosophical reasons that make up his argumentative plan. To support this hypothesis, my first objective is to outline such a plan, following an informal model of the argumentative analysis. This approach also guides a more reflective critical assessment of his pessimistic logic. Thus, the second objective is to introduce some parameters for further evaluation of the argumentative reach of Schopenhauerian pessimism.

Keywords: Schopenhauer; Pessimism; Argumentative analysis

RESUMO

Arthur Schopenhauer é considerado uma espécie de arquipessimista e fundador do movimento classificado como "pessimismo filosófico moderno," por sua pretensão inovadora de sustentar, de

[1] This article, presented at the X International Schopenhauer Colloquium, is a translated compressed version of a part of my doctoral dissertation. This version also anticipates some of the dissertation's main conclusions, indicating how they can be matured in subsequent studies.

maneira sistemática e em "razões objetivas," que o não ser é melhor do que o ser. Entretanto, dois outros grupos de estudiosos seguem direções diferentes desta. Um deles não nega o pessimismo de Schopenhauer, mas o atribui predominantemente a razões subjetivas, como o seu comportamento melancólico desencadeado sobretudo pela relação conflituosa com a sua mãe. O outro grupo sequer toma Schopenhauer como um pessimista, e sim, ao contrário, como um otimista, numa indicação de que nos faltam critérios claros e explícitos para compreender o que seria o pessimismo desse autor. Este trabalho defende que há, sim, uma "lógica" pessimista objetivamente articulada no interior da filosofia de Schopenhauer, e que por isso o pessimismo schopenhaueriano deve ser analisado de acordo com as razões filosóficas que compõem o seu plano argumentativo. A fim de sustentar essa hipótese, o primeiro objetivo é evidenciar tal plano, seguindo um modelo informal de análise argumentativa. Essa abordagem também orienta uma apreciação crítica mais refletida da sua "lógica" pessimista. Assim, o segundo objetivo é introduzir alguns parâmetros para ulterior avaliação do alcance argumentativo do pessimismo schopenhaueriano.

Palavras-chave: Schopenhauer; Pessimismo; Análise argumentativa

Arthur Schopenhauer (W II: 684 [II 656]; 690 [II 691]; 692 [II 664])[2] is considered a kind of arch-pessimist and founder of the movement classified as "modern philosophical pessimism," due to his innovative claim to maintain, in a completely systematic way and on "objective reasons," that non-being is better than being (see Horkheimer, 1971: 1-5; Invernizzi, 1994: 32; Janaway, 1999: 318; Hannan, 2009: 119; Beiser, 2016: 63-65; Shapshay, 2019: 37). According to this interpretative line, Schopenhauerian pessimism is systematic because follows from his metaphysics of Will, and its reasons are objective because they are causes of conclusions in an argument.

However, two other groups of scholars follow different directions. One of them does not deny Schopenhauer's pessimism but attributes it predominantly to subjective reasons, that is, causes of positions that do not consist of conclusions in arguments, thus being the same as motivations. An example of a reason for this type would be his melancholic behavior triggered mainly by the conflicting relationship with his mother (see Holingdale, 1970: 18; Magee, 1997: 11-13; Fischer, 1897). The other group does not even consider Schopenhauer as a pessimist, but, on the contrary, as an optimist (see Bazardjian, 1909; Wendel, 1912; Ingenkamp, 2012; Fellmann, 2012),

[2] When citing Schopenhauer's works, the pagination of the translations consulted is given in parentheses, and in square brackets the pagination of the editions originally in German, both specified in the "Bibliographic References" at the end of the text.

an indication that we lack clear and explicit criteria for understanding what Schopenhauerian pessimism would be[3].

The present paper argues that there is, indeed, a pessimistic logic objectively articulated within Schopenhauer's doctrine of Will, and that therefore we must examine Schopenhauerian pessimism according to the philosophical reasons that make up his argumentative plan. To support this hypothesis, my first objective is to outline such a plan, following an informal model of the argumentative analysis indicated for the study of "substantial arguments," which are not strictly "analytical" (see Kienpointner, 1987; Walton Et Al, 2008; Hansen; Cohen, 2011; Toulmin, 2001). This approach has the advantage of revealing in more detail the chain of Schopenhauer's reasoning about the value of life, in addition to guiding a more reflective critical assessment of his pessimistic logic. Thus, the second objective is to introduce some parameters for further evaluation of the argumentative reach of Schopenhauerian pessimism.

Unlike the "analytical syllogisms" of traditional Aristotelian logic, in the case of "substantial arguments," the conclusions are not expected to be "necessary." Therefore, some of them appear qualified with terms such as "probably," to mark them as provisional, "presumably," for those subject to exceptions, or "as long as," if they are conditioned. These terms are "**modal qualifiers**" (q). Furthermore, substantial arguments are basically composed of the following parts: first, they present their "**data**" (d), their most elementary and empirically accessible claims; then they establish their own "**warranties**" (w), theoretical positions that justify the passage from data to conclusion; subsequently, they offer "**backings**" (b), which are the ultimate reasons for the argument, since they substantiate the warranties; finally, it is worth explaining the "**conditions of rebuttal**" (r), circumstances in which the inferences of the argument do not apply (see Toulmin, 2001: 139; 203).

Following the consensus among the scholarly literature on Schopenhauer, his pessimistic conclusion is that it would be better not to be **(c)**: "our state is so wretched that complete non existence would be decidedly preferable to it" (W I: 324

[I 383]). The philosopher presents the reasons for this judgment in more detail in §§ 57-59 of Tome I of *The World as Will and Representation*, Chapter 46 of the *Supplements* of this book, and Chapters 11 and 12 of *Parerga and Paralipomena* (see Janaway, 1999; Beiser, 2016: 49).

In these texts, the philosopher presents two data **(d)** as more immediate support for his pessimistic conclusion. The first datum **(d1)** is that **in life suffering has supremacy over joy** (W I: 376 [I382]), whether we think about the lives of individuals or whether we think about humanity as a whole. If, "by proceeding more a posteriori, we turned to more definite instances, brought pictures to the imagination, and described by examples the unspeakable misery presented by experience and history, wherever we look, and whatever avenue we explore," Schopenhauer writes, we will realize that human life "is not capable of any true bliss or happiness, but is essentially suffering in many forms" (W I: 323 [I 381]. A little further on, the philosopher lists some examples of suffering, ordinary and historical: "hospitals, infirmaries, operating theatres, through prisons, torture-chambers, and slave-hovels, over battlefields and [...] places of execution" (W I: 376-377 [I 383]).

And in addition to all these physical ailments, we are weighed down by many other subjective concerns, such as "passionate love, jealousy, envy, hatred, anxiety, ambition, avarice." And in their absence, finally, it is boredom that quickly takes over and afflicts us, because, "if it cannot find entry in any other shape," the pain "comes in the sad, grey garment of weariness, satiety, and boredom" (W I: 315 [I 371]). With this in mind, Schopenhauer is proposing a "pessimistic balance" that would reveal a kind of "ubiquity of suffering" (see Janaway, 1999: 327). The pain is present wherever our eyes turn, in every corner of the world around us and within ourselves.

But would that be enough to conclude that life is not worth living? Schopenhauer seems to be aware that this eudemonistic view needs to be reinforced. Otherwise, the first "datum" of his argument could sound like "a mere declamation on human misery," exposed to the accusation of "one-sidedness" based on "particular facts" (W I: 323 [I 381-382]). However, we can also find in

Schopenhauerian texts the "warranties" that reinforce this first aspect of his pessimism. These "warranties" are precisely three theories: **life is a mortal struggle for survival (w1.1), all satisfaction is negative (w1.2), and desires are insatiable (w1.3)**.

According to the first warranty (w1.1), nature manifests itself as a life-and-death struggle for subsistence. Throughout nature, we see "conflict" and "discord," as Schopenhauer explains (W I [175]; P II: 303 [V 312]): "a restless struggle, a powerful wrestling for life and existence through the exertion of all bodily and mental powers." In general and in a more poetic formulation, the world is a "battle-ground of tormented and agonized beings who continue to exist only by each devouring the other" (W II 581 [II 664]). In § 27 of *The World*, Schopenhauer gives a detailed account of this deadly struggle for survival that pervades the universe, from inorganic nature, through the vegetable and animal kingdoms to human beings.

The second "warranty" is the thesis of the negativity of satisfaction (w1.2), according to which all the satisfaction we commonly have in life is illusory; that is, it is not real, and it is not effective. "All satisfaction, or what is commonly called happiness," as Schopenhauer writes, "is really and essentially always negative only, and never positive. It is not a gratification which comes to us originally and of itself, but it must always be the satisfaction of a wish" (W I: 319-320 [I 376-377]). In other words, Schopenhauer defines happiness as the mere absence of desire and then indicates that desire, the need for something, is constant and the only thing that affects us. Proof of this is that we feel pain, but not the absence of it: "everything unpleasant and painful we feel immediately," but "we do not feel the health of our entire body but only the small place where the shoe pinches" (W II: 686 [II 658]; P II, 307 [V 317]). Therefore, "we others [...] can be made perfectly miserable by trifling incidents, but perfectly happy by nothing in the world" (W II: 690 [II 661]).

Furthermore, in unfolding these reflections, the author radicalizes pessimism with the third "warranty" to his first data. This is the theory of the insatiability of will

(w1.3). It means that our individual will is by nature insatiable, "eternally insatiable," and therefore can never obtain any permanent contentment; on the contrary, "every satisfaction produces a new desire" (P II: 304 [V 311]). This reasoning is a corollary of the negativity of satisfaction thesis (w1.2): if all satisfaction is negative, without effectiveness, we must infer that our desires will never find absolute satisfaction.

At the same time, Schopenhauer defends as a second data of his pessimism that **humans are, among all animals, the most susceptible to suffering (d2)**. The feeling of lack or need is suffering, and the human being is the "most necessitous of all beings," with "concrete needing," "a concretion of a thousand needs" (W I: 312 [I 368]). This view imposes even more firmly the conclusion that it would be better if we had not been born, given our unfortunate condition compared to any other form of life: "In the plant, there is as yet no sensibility, and hence no pain. A certain very small degree of both dwells in the lowest animals [...]; even in insects the capacity to feel and suffer is still limited." This capacity appears to a higher degree "with the complete nervous system of the vertebrate animals," and continues to increase as the "intelligence is developed." Therefore, in the human being, in which "knowledge attains to distinctness" and "consciousness is enhanced," torment "reaches its highest degree" (W I: 299-400 [I365-I366]).

Furthermore, the most highly developed intelligence in human beings, far from helping us deal better with suffering, exposes us to another great threat: our selfishness. Because of their intelligence, their capacity derived from reason, and without analog in other animals, human beings can compare motives and reflect on the means to achieve their objectives, thus tending towards a more individualistic stance (W II: 690 [II 661]). "In general, however, the conduct of men towards one another is characterized as a rule by injustice, extreme unfairness, hardness, and even cruelty; an opposite course of conduct appears only by way of exception." Just think, as the philosopher suggests, about how human beings deal with the slavery of black people, "the ultimate object of which is sugar and coffee."

We thus have two “data” and their respective “warranties” that lead us to conclude that non-being is better than being. However, all of these warranties, as Schopenhauer understands them (W I: 375-376 [I 381-382]), are the result of a “perfectly cold and philosophical demonstration,” which, according to him, places beyond all suspicion his considerations “about inevitable suffering.” Such a demonstration is considered “cold” and “philosophical” because, according to him, it is based on “universal premises,” which, in turn, express “the essence of life.” Thus, the author prompts us to ask for the “backing” of his warranties.

In this “backing,” or “universal premises,” we find the last and definitive objective reasons to compose the argumentative layout of Schopenhauerian pessimism. I argue that the description of “Will” by the philosopher fulfills the function of this “backing.” For him, the Will” is the “essence” of nature and everything that exists is a mere manifestation of this essence. Basically, the ultimate backing of Schopenhauerian pessimism is **the irrational, vain, and insatiable nature of the world, which is Will and which manifests itself more perfectly in the most complex organisms (b)**.

In fact, because the universe is a Will, it has no other activity than wanting. And “since nothing exists beside it,” but everything is a manifestation of it, it is inevitable that the Will has to devour itself since “it is a hungry Will.” Consequently, nature is a “chain of torturing deaths,” where “every beast of prey [...] is the living grave of thousands of others” (W II: 581 [II 662-663]; 695 [II 664]). This explains why the world is a mortal struggle for survival (w1.1).

So, Schopenhauer states that “the nature of the world,” the “principle of the world's existence,” which is the Will, “is expressly groundless,” that is, it is vain (W II: 579 [II 663]). Following “the principle of sufficient reason,” all things we perceive have a reason for being the way they are; on the other hand, they have no reason or foundation for coming into existence. This is because the Will in itself does not submit to the principle of reason but is, instead, its foundation (W II: 691 [II 662]). In this case, the Will is “groundless,” meaning that the only immutable property of every entity in the world, even of existence itself, is, in a word, to be vain (see Malter, 2009:

625). Hence, nothing in the world has an effective reality; therefore, “all satisfaction is negative” (w1.2).

Furthermore, the “insatiable” nature of the Will also explains why “desires are insatiable” (w1.3). Schopenhauer states that “the grounds for this lie deep in the very nature of things”; these grounds are found in that Will (W II: 573 [II 655]). It is because we mirror the insatiability of the Will that we are unable to satisfy our own desires, and “earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated, or recognized as an illusion” (W II: 573 [II 665]).

Finally, it must be said that although the Will finds its “most distinct and perfect” manifestation in the human being, such manifestation “alone could not express its true being.” To appear in its greatest perfection, in its most complex manifestation, the Will cannot exhibit itself singly and separately but has to be “accompanied by all the grades downwards through all the forms of animals, through the plant kingdom to the inorganic. They all supplement one another for the complete objectification of the will,” in the human species (W I: 153 [I 182]). Therefore, in this “gradation of the phenomena of the Will,” each higher degree manifests with more perfection, with the countless afflictions that it brings, that “insatiable” and “vain” impetus of the Will. For this reason, “suffering is greater in more complex organisms” (w2).

Furthermore, it is still possible to point out “**conditions of rebuttal**” (r) to Schopenhauer's argumentation. This does not mean that his pessimism is false, but rather that his own arguments anticipate situations that do not fit into his pessimistic conclusion that life is not worth living. These situations are **the aesthetic phenomenon and the self-denial of the Will** (r).

The “aesthetic phenomenon” occurs in the enjoyment of beauty and art, which awaken in us “the finest part of life, its purest joy,” as Schopenhauer explains (W I: 314 [I370]). This is because, in the aesthetic phenomenon, we somehow forget ourselves and contemplate beauty in a “disinterested” way, oblivious to the Will's desires that bring so much suffering. However, this state lasts a very short time; it is

as ephemeral as “a fleeting dream,” as it requires a rare intellectual disposition, which is “granted only to extremely few” whom Schopenhauer classifies as “geniuses.”

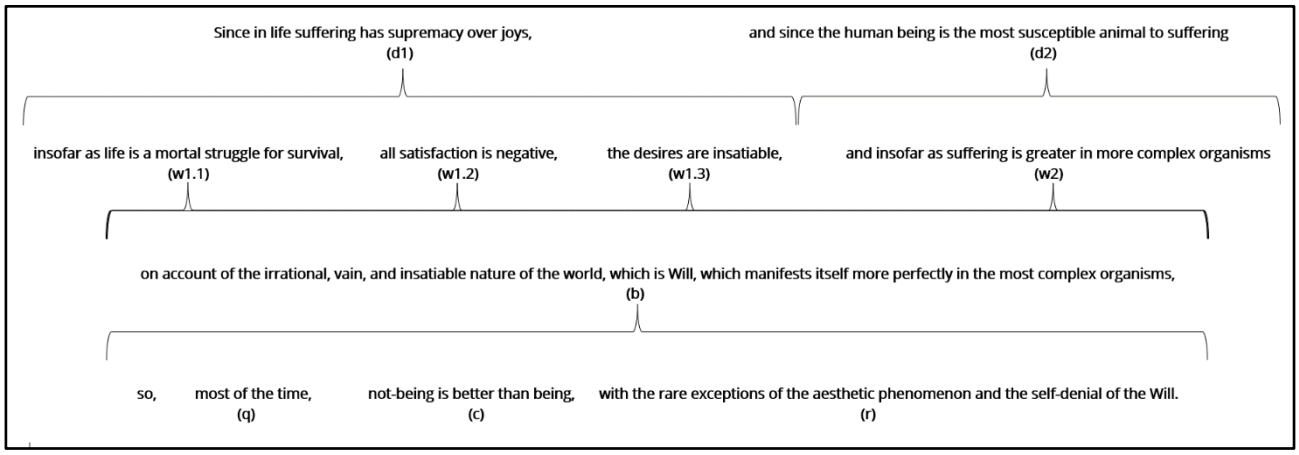
Even rarer than the disposition to enjoy beauty is the condition that, for Schopenhauer, represents our only chance of “redemption” from the sufferings of the world: self-denial in the Will. This event would bring relief from suffering and “inner cheerfulness and true heavenly peace.” We can observe it in practice in a very special circumstance, that is, in the exercise of “compassion,” the purest form of love, worthy of the “saints” (W I: 390-391 [I 443-I 444]; 411 [I 461]; W II: 606 [II 688]). At the same time, the “denial of the will” is exceptional, because the Will “most of the time does not tolerate” its suppression in any of its manifestations.” Furthermore, this phenomenon does not even depend on us, but rather on an act of freedom that belongs solely to the cosmic essence. In this sense, it is a transcendental phenomenon, inaccessible to our ability to know the ordinary phenomena of our experience (W I: 286-287 [I 338]; 331 [I 363]; 338 [I 387]).

In other words, the situations we can take as “conditions of rebuttal” of Schopenhauerian pessimism are extremely difficult to obtain. Therefore, instead of considering them as elements of some form of “optimism” in Schopenhauer, as some studies do (Ingenkamp, 2012: 31-32; 34-36; Fellmann, 2012: 520), it is more appropriate to understand them as exceptions to his pessimism. By recognizing these exceptions, Schopenhauer (W II: 677 [II 650]; 683 [II 655]; 690 [I 661]; 757 [II 729]) is prudent enough to use “modals qualifiers” (q) that make it clear that his pessimistic conclusion cannot be absolutized: “life presents itself as a “burden,” “miserable,” “tragic,” and this happens “**as a rule**,” “**most of the time**,” for “**the most of people**,” and “**in rare exceptions**” (q).

We have well-developed studies that identify “pessimism” in the most diverse spheres of Schopenhauer's philosophy: “epistemological pessimism,” “metaphysical pessimism,” “existential pessimism,” “anthropological pessimism,” “moral pessimism,” “pragmatic pessimism” are just a few (Stäglich, 1951-1952: 33; Rosset,

1967: 37; Fellmann, 2012: 518; Barboza, 2015: 4; Debona, 2020: 26-27; Moraes, 2020). However, the expansion of this framework through the coining of ever-new types of pessimism can also mean something else: the search for understanding Schopenhauerian pessimism exclusively from different facets of his thought – his theory of knowledge, metaphysics or ethics – has led us away from another problem to be investigated (see Invernizzi, 1994: 19-20). For what objective reasons is Schopenhauerian philosophy characterized as pessimistic, after all?

It is important to highlight the fabric of the objective reasons for Schopenhauerian pessimism. The graphical representation proposed below allows us to better visualize how the "data," "warranties," "backing," "modals qualifiers" and "conditions of rebuttal" lead Schopenhauer to conclude that life is not worth living:



One may agree that there is an "epistemological pessimism" in Schopenhauer, as he argues that our rational comprehension of the world, based solely on concepts, will never reveal to us the most intimate essence of things; or a "metaphysical pessimism," as he understands the cosmos as a complex of eternally unsatisfied desires; or an "anthropological pessimism," concluding that in such a world, our personal interests will be constantly frustrated; or a "pragmatic pessimism," for denying that the wisdom of life can bring significant changes to these frustrations; or a "moral pessimism," acknowledging that it is impossible to improve our character just as it is impossible to change the nature of existence; or an "existential

pessimism," due to his theory that existence and all its sufferings are completely casual, and therefore, vain.

However, from the perspective of the informal logical analysis that I propose, Schopenhauer's pessimism is better understood as a unique argumentative whole based on the objective reasons he himself offered. In fact, he never referred to himself as a "pessimist" in any of his published writings during his lifetime. Yet, in 1828, just ten years after the publication of Volume I of *The World*, he confessed in an outline of his studies: "My doctrine is pessimistic"[3]. By 1855, already in his sixties, he went even further and wrote in a letter to his friend Frauenstädt: "My pessimism grew from 1814 to 1818, when it seemed complete" (SW: XV 393; NIII 464)[4]. Schopenhauer's main pessimistic conclusion is undeniably that non-being is better than being. He presented all the objective reasons, which I summarized in the argumentative framework above, in the texts where he explicitly supported such a conclusion: §§ 57-59 of Volume I of *The World*, Chapter 46 of the Supplements to this book, and Chapters 11 and 12 of *Parerga and Paralipomena*. Therefore, I conclude that the least controversial way to advance the study of Schopenhauerian pessimism is to evaluate these reasons and their conclusion together.

Moreover, this approach allows for a fairer critical assessment of Schopenhauerian pessimism. The argumentative moves I have presented in this paper show that the aesthetic phenomenon and the denial of the Will are exceptions — rarities that do not apply to the general rule that life is not worth living. Therefore, those who identify objective reasons for any form of optimism in Schopenhauer must contend that he misinterpreted his own assumptions (see Bazardjian, 1909; Wendel, 1912; Ingenkamp, 2012). This is the hypothesis of Ingenkamp (2012: 31-32; 34-36), for example. According to him, Schopenhauer was mistaken when he claimed that the blessedness of the saints comes not from any personal merit, but solely

[3] This statement is among the study notes in which Schopenhauer reflects on the "pantheism" of the philosopher and theologian Scotus Erigena (815 AD - 877 AD).

[4] 1814 and 1818 are, respectively, the years in which Schopenhauer began and finished writing his magnum opus, *The World as Will and Representation, Volume I.*

from a free decision of their Will. Such a statement would be based on the stealthy infiltration of a Protestant teaching external to Schopenhauerian thought — a specific type of Christianity historically derived from Calvinism. For Ingenkamp (2012: 31-32; 34-36), it seems to be more a kind of “decree,” rather than a logical consequence, which explains why Schopenhauer considers the suppression of the Will as a “grace.”

To prove this point, Ingenkamp (2012: 31-32; 34-36) draws attention to the detailed description Schopenhauer offers of the practices of holy individuals: self-imposed renunciations through a hard, penitent way of life and the search for the unpleasant to suppress the Will. In this case, Schopenhauer would have proposed an eschatology very close to Plato's. For both Plato and Schopenhauer, fusion with the absolute good would be attainable and thus worth pursuing. For Plato, this could be learned in the academy; for Schopenhauer, it is achieved through the denial of the Will by the saints he so highly praised.

Even though Schopenhauer (PI: 243 [IV 249]) acknowledges that the ultimate goal of temporal existence is to move away from the Will, as Ingenkamp (2012: 39) notes, this does not change the Schopenhauerian conception that such a phenomenon is extremely rare. Furthermore, there is no evidence in Schopenhauer's texts that humanity can evolve into a society of saints or ascetics who have learned to deny the Will. On the contrary, Schopenhauer's words about the “lack of consideration for his like which is peculiar to man, and springs from his boundless egoism, and sometimes even from wickedness” confirm this (W II: 578 [II 661]).

Shapshay's (2019: 11-22) interpretation is more precise. By indicating the possibility, albeit minimal, of a redemptive denial of the Will, Schopenhauer could be considered a “knight with hope,” but this does not mean he is any less a “knight of despair.” This distinction can be adapted to the results of my study. The “knight with hope” would be left with the “conditions of rebuttal” to the pessimism upheld

by the “knight of despair,” namely, aesthetic contemplation and the phenomenon of self-denial of the Will.

As for interpretations based on subjective reasons, they would be more appropriate if we were dealing with an expressivist thinker, rather than a philosopher like Schopenhauer. However, if one insists on linking the term pessimism to subjective reasons, there is a problem. The anecdotes that expose a melancholic and irascible side of Schopenhauer's personality are already widely known. However, this does not prove that he was pessimistic for these subjective reasons. On the other hand, one could pose this pertinent question: “How can a philosopher of kindness, philanthropy, art, and morality be considered a simple pessimist?” (Wendel, 1992: 88-90).

Schopenhauer's appreciation of art and morality is well documented in his writings, including those expressing his position on the value of life. Additionally, biographical records indicate that Schopenhauer exhibited “kindness” and “philanthropy” on many occasions throughout his life. During his stay in France with his father and mother, when he was 16 years old, Arthur visited the famous fort in Toulon where King Louis XIV had imprisoned his war captives. The young Arthur looked disconsolate upon witnessing the miserable situation faced by the galley slaves (Safranski, 2011: 95-96). In his later years, he designated part of his assets to the fund established in Berlin for the support of disabled soldiers who fought in the insurrections of 1848 and 1849, as well as for the descendants (*Hinterbliebenen*) of those who died in these conflicts (Safranski, 2011: 604)[5]. Johanna Schopenhauer acknowledged that her son's moral qualities were significant: “I know your feelings very well and I know that there are few better than you” (Safranski, 2011: 173)[6]. A paper reminds us of how Arthur Schopenhauer contributed to preventing cruelty

[5] This same attitude, which confirms the feeling of compassion cultivated by Schopenhauer throughout his life, also exposes his reactionary tendencies, since his charity was motivated by his appreciation for the soldiers who “sought to maintain and reestablish legal order in Germany” (Safranski, 2011: 604).

[6] She wrote this in the same letter, in which she used very harsh words against her son, on the occasion of a warning he had received from the University of Gotha.

against animals (see Schwantje, 1912: 60)[7]. So, from a subjective point of view, there are many reasons to justify both optimism and pessimism in Schopenhauer.

Two scholars, so enthusiastic about Arthur Schopenhauer's virtues, agree in comparing him to the Nazarene, as the founder of a religion of peace and love (Bazardjian, 1909: 99; Wendel, 1912: 90). At a certain point, the argument about Schopenhauer's alleged optimism seems definitely outside the philosophical realm and perhaps cannot even be taken seriously within the scope of psychology. We read that the narratives describing Schopenhauer as melancholic, insensitive, or ill-tempered are "envious" (Wendel, 1912: 89). A debate moving in this direction needs a course correction.

Understanding Schopenhauer's pessimism as a unified and coherent argumentation allows us to expand our interpretation of other fundamental aspects of his philosophy. This unified view not only reinforces the seriousness and internal coherence of his thought but also influences how we approach his ethics and aesthetics. For example, Schopenhauer's emphasis on the denial of the Will and aesthetic contemplation as rare escapes from suffering takes on new significance when we recognize that these exceptions actually affirm the fundamental pessimism of his worldview. Schopenhauer's ethics, often seen as paradoxical in its advocacy of compassion in a meaningless world, reveals itself under this perspective as a logical extension of his pessimism — a call to transcend selfish desires as the only viable response to the unsatisfactory nature of existence. Similarly, his aesthetics, which allows for a temporary suspension of the Will, appears not as a denial of pessimism but as an aesthetic acknowledgment of a state that, due to its rarity, underscores the hopelessness of the human condition.

Considering specifically the objective reasons laid out in this article, it is possible to pose several critical questions to assess the consistency of Schopenhauer's pessimistic argumentation. He starts with observations about human experience

[7] For a more developed study of the social improvements Schopenhauer would have encouraged from a theoretical point of view, see Shapshay (2019 [Chapter 2]).

(data) to support the claim that suffering is inherent to existence and, ultimately, that non-being is preferable to being. In this regard, it is worth questioning whether these "data" are truly representative and comprehensive. And is the experience of suffering, however common, sufficient to justify such a universal conclusion? The answer seems to be "no," as Schopenhauer provides "warranties" to link these data to his pessimistic conclusion. These "warranties" are, in turn, deduced from his metaphysical view of the world as a "blind Will" (backing). Therefore, it is pertinent to ask whether these deductions could be challenged by other philosophical interpretations. For instance, Nietzsche also posits that the world is Will, but he does not draw the same conclusions as Schopenhauer. Could other philosophical currents serve as counterexamples that challenge the validity of Schopenhauer's metaphysical pessimistic inferences, weakening the "backing" for his pessimism? It is appropriate to dedicate a specific work to discuss these eventual problems in Schopenhauer's pessimistic argumentation, improving a work already started in recent research (Freitas, 2023: 101-103; 177-187).

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Authorship contributions

1 – Matheus Silva Freitas
PhD in Philosophy from the Federal University of Sergipe.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5260-4688 • silvafreitasmatheus@hotmail.com
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