

Subject, World and Value

(Some Hypotheses on the Influence of Schopenhauer in the early Wittgenstein)

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Introduction

It is an acknowledged fact that Wittgenstein read Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Representation*.¹) in his youth, and possibly other works by the same author (Anscombe, 1963; McGuinness, 1988). In general, Wittgenstein is reluctant to recognize other authors' influences on his thought, but in his *Notebooks, 1914-1916*² he makes explicit reference to Schopenhauer, and it is also a commonplace that his influence is present in many of the theses and ideas of the *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*³ (Anscombe, 1959; Gardiner, 1963; Janik, 1966; Micheletti, 1967; Engel, 1969). Wittgenstein himself recognized in conversations with close colleagues that, as a young man, he came to think that Schopenhauer had got the basics right (Von Wright, 1954; Bouwsma, 1986). Such recognition cannot be seen to weaken in his later philosophy.

If we keep in mind the fact that such relevant texts as the *Notebooks, 1914-16* and the *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (*Culture and Value*) were not published until 1961 and 1977 respectively, it becomes less surprising that the study of the relationships between Wittgenstein's thought and Schopenhauer's philosophy was not begun until relatively late. Studies by Gardiner (1963) and Janik (1966), as well as Micheletti's monograph (1967), may be considered pioneering contributions. To these must be added the contributions of Morris Engel (1969), A. P. Griffiths (1974), Bryan Magee (1983), E. M. Lange (1989) and Hans-Johann Glock (1999).

According to these and other Wittgenstein scholars, Schopenhauer's influence on his thought permeates many concepts, theses and points of view throughout his work, in some cases Wittgenstein adopted the strict

¹ Hereafter referred to as WWI and quoted by volumen, chapter and page.

² Hereafter referred to as NB and quoted by date and page of the English translation.

³ Hereafter referred to as TLP and quoted by paragraph.

Schopenhauerian meaning, and in others, he revised and modified it in terms of his specific interests. My purpose here is to trace certain implications of an element of that influence providing a metaphilosophical key to the understanding of the true meaning of particular philosophical theses that Wittgenstein points out in the *Notebooks* and develops in the final part of the *Tractatus*.

The point in question is the following: Wittgenstein decided to outline a limit to the linguistic expression of thought employing, in a certain way, the distinction between representations and will that Schopenhauer had used to reinterpret the Kantian distinction between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself. In same way as Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein maintains that the world of science corresponds to the phenomenon, to the world as 'representation', to the world of facts; and equally considers that everything that has to do with the matters of the greatest importance and value for us – the meaning of our existence or of the existence of the world, the relationship between the willing subject and ethics, the nature of art, the possibility of an existence beyond this world, etc., in short, everything that has to do with that which is vaguely called 'the meaning of life', resides in the will, which is outside the world. Even so, the possible Schopenhauerian source of the separation that Wittgenstein traces between fact and value, does not deny their deep discrepancies of content as regards conceptions of the subject, the world and will.

Continuing the thread of this last observation, I should like to clarify the way that I use the word 'influence' to label the way that reading Schopenhauer could have made Wittgenstein think. I have not tried to isolate and identify certain elements in particular texts by Wittgenstein that are taken from Schopenhauer's philosophy, in the way that an archaeologist discovers pieces of an earlier building in a later one. My approach has been guided by an entirely different image, suggested by Wittgenstein himself: 'I think there is some truth in my idea that I really only think reproductively. I don't believe I have ever *invented* a line of thinking. I have always taken one over from someone else. I have simply straightaway seized on it with enthusiasm for my work of clarification. That is how Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler, Sraffa have influenced me' (Wittgenstein 1980, 18e-19e). If we compare Wittgenstein's activity of clarification with the growth of a plant, we can think of the foreign elements as nutrients that have fed it according to its own nature (which he characterizes as enthusiasm!) In this process of absorption, the nutrients are metabolized according to the

specific needs of the plant that feeds on them. So that, if we look for their effects in the plant, we will only be able to find them transformed and adapted to the new context. The idea of 'influence', then, acquires the sense of an inspiration, rather than a loan. What I seek to suggest, when establishing comparisons between certain of Wittgenstein's thoughts and certain philosophemes of *The World as Will and Representation*, is that Wittgenstein could find materials in Schopenhauer's book that he apprehended and transformed until he changed them into his own thoughts that were, therefore, different from their place of origin.

1. Philosophy and the Question of Limits

There is considerable agreement among Wittgenstein scholars that the Kantian bias of the *Tractatus* is conditioned by the Kant he discovered in his reading of Schopenhauer. David Pears' opinion in this respect is telling: 'He [Wittgenstein] took much of the framework of the *Tractatus* from Kant through Schopenhauer, whom he had read and admired, and, though he modified this framework in his second period, he never destroyed it' (Pears, 1971, 46). It would be proper, however, to define which aspects of Schopenhauerian Kantism were retained by Wittgenstein and which he rejected.

Schopenhauer combines elements taken from Kant with others taken from Plato in his philosophy. From Kant, he takes the idea of the world as 'representation', that is, as a phenomenon for us, as an object for understanding according to the 'principle of reason' (that establishes *a priori* the forms of space, time and causality as conditions of knowledge). The turn towards Plato takes place when also conceiving the world as a reality-in-itself endowed with an essence that we can know, not intellectually, but intuitively, even when it is not exhaustive and wholly satisfactory knowledge (cf. *WWR*, II, §41, 494). Schopenhauer distances himself from both when he characterizes essence as 'will', conceived as an originating and unconscious force, as an impulse to a self-assertion of existence that occurs in all beings, and which, in man, has the intellect as an instrument at its service.

But if the metaphysical push to affirm the will as the real essence of the world is Platonic, the contention of that push within the limits of experience is, again, of Kantian inspiration. Indeed, for Schopenhauer the essence of the world is not transcendent, but postulated as an explanatory

principle of the intrinsic coherence of experience, in a broad sense of the term. Now, that explanation should be circumscribed by experience and not seek answers to questions that exceed its limits (such as, for example, where does universal will come from or why does it also manifest itself as individual will). For this reason, Schopenhauer says, 'my philosophy... is *immanent* in the Kantian sense of the word' (*WWR*, II, §50, 641).

Thus, Schopenhauer joins Kant by reducing theoretical knowledge of the world to 'representation', to the group of phenomena subject to the necessary conditions of the principle of reason. And, in consequence, he also agrees with Kant in rejecting all transcendent metaphysics. But he distances himself from Kant when postulating the possibility of a higher type of knowledge than theoretical knowledge, namely: the intuitive knowledge of the reality-in-itself of the world as will. No matter how much Schopenhauer considers that his philosophy 'abides by the facts of external and internal experience, just as they are accessible to each person' (*ibid.*), his idea of intuitive knowledge of the will transcends the limits of experience in the Kantian sense of the term – that is to say, in the sense defined by modern natural science – and to that extent disagrees with Kant.

We might say that Wittgenstein's position on this point is closer to the real Kant than the Schopenhauerian. In the *Tractatus*, he establishes that only the propositions that represent possible states of things can be true or false. Possible knowledge is thus circumscribed within the scope defined by the conditions of the meaning of language, and this implies restricting it to natural science (TLP 4.11). For Wittgenstein there is no knowledge possible of the world other than that which conforms to the conditions of what Schopenhauer called 'the world as representation', with the important restriction that Wittgenstein rejects all *a priori* knowledge of the world: natural science is empirical knowledge of contingent facts. In consequence, the propositions of transcendent metaphysics would be just as nonsensical (*unsinnig*) for him as those that express the presumed intuitive knowledge of Schopenhauerian will.

Wittgenstein defends the idea that philosophy is *a priori*, not because it deals with objects which transcend experience, but because it deals with the formal or structural features of experience. In this critical or reflexive turn, Wittgenstein joins Kant again. However, in the way that Wittgenstein determines this task, it is possible that Schopenhauer has exercised an indirect influence. The *Tractatus* tries to distinguish forms of discourse with meaning from others that lack it. This tentative effort is similar to the

one that Kant undertook in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, with a significant difference: Kant wished to mark the boundaries of human *knowledge*, while Wittgenstein intends, more radically, to mark the boundaries of meaningful *discourse*. Or, to put this more precisely, philosophy must fix the limits of *thought* by marking the boundaries of the linguistic expression of thought. This shift from knowledge to thought, from experience to language, could somehow be endorsed by having read Schopenhauer. Indeed, Schopenhauer put the emphasis on 'representation', rather than consciousness. The Schopenhauerian notion of 'representation' is closer to the symbolic or linguistic relationship between thought and reality than the epistemological – and according to Wittgenstein, psychologistic – conception of the 'idea' as a mental representation of the thing. In this sense, Schopenhauer's *Vorstellung* could have contributed to the creation of the Wittgensteinian notion of *Abbildung* (*Representation*) (cf. TLP 2.151, 2.22, 4.015).

2. The Metaphysical I and the World

A central motif of the method applied by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* is to eradicate psychologism from the logical analysis of the language, taking it in a similar direction to that started by Frege in the philosophy of logic and mathematics. In the expression of this task, Wittgenstein used a conceptual instrument that some interpreters (Black, 1964; Micheletti, 1967; Lange, 1989) consider to have been inspired by his reading of Schopenhauer, that is: a transcendental conception of the I that takes the form of the *knowing subject* in Schopenhauer and functions as a necessary condition of the world as 'representation', and takes the form of the *metaphysical subject* in Wittgenstein. The I of the *Tractatus* is located, as is the Schopenhauerian knowing subject at a higher level than the phenomenic I in Schopenhauer, and than the subject 'as it is conceived in contemporary superficial psychology' (TLP 5.5421). The notion of the metaphysical subject, perhaps inspired by Schopenhauer, plays a decisive role in Wittgenstein in the rejection of certain suppositions of metaphysics inherited from the modern epistemological tradition. Let us see.

Wittgenstein affirms that the I makes its appearance in philosophy is not a part of the world, but 'a limit of the world' (TLP 5.632). Just as the eye makes it possible for there to be a visual field coordinated with it, but without being part of it and without anything in it making it possible to

infer that it is an eye that sees it (TLP 5.633), thus too the I delimits the field of the thinkable – understanding by ‘thinking’ our projection of the meaning of the proposition onto the world (TLP, 3.11) – and it does this without being part of the world and without anything making it possible to infer in the proposition that has been thought that it is an I who thinks it. The limiting statute of the Wittgensteinian metaphysical I may be considered to be one of the acknowledged features of Kantism in the *Tractatus*. And, in view of certain analogies, it is worth asking if it does not also have a relationship with the Schopenhauerian knowing subject.

Schopenhauer uses the expression ‘knowing subject’ in two different senses: on the one hand, to designate the subject that knows things as objects conditioned by space, time and causality; and, on the other hand, to refer to the ‘pure subject of knowing’ (*WWR*, I, § 36, 179), which arises when the individual subject surrenders to the intuitive contemplation of the object, becomes lost in that contemplation and separates from his individuality. Then, the subject does not know things as singular phenomena, but as eternal objectifications of the essence of the world, that is, as ideas. If we make an abstraction of this strange mixture of Kantian and Platonic elements that Schopenhauer combines in this notion of the ‘pure subject of knowing’, we can preserve its atemporal and non-individual character as aspects in which it resembles the Wittgensteinian metaphysical I.

The similarity also extends to another aspect: the impossibility of being represented. To the extent that the ‘universal condition of all objects’, the Schopenhauerian subject ‘is always presupposed’ (*WWR*, I, § 2, 5), and we never know it. It cannot have a form of representation other than the one that conforms to the necessary conditions of space, time and causality. Since the knowing subject is outside space and time, it cannot be known. Neither does the Wittgensteinian metaphysical subject form part of the world; and, like the eye that cannot see itself, the metaphysical subject cannot be thought about.

But the analogy between both notions is broken at two crucial points. In the first place, the metaphysical subject of the *Tractatus* is not a subject of knowledge, but a subject of *thought* (*Denken*), understanding as such, not some mental process – thought thus conceived is a fact that forms part of the world and has a psychological subject (cf. TLP 4.1121) – but rather the action of projecting the meaning of a propositional sign onto the world (cf. TLP 3.11), by means of which an internal figurative relationship is

established between the sign and the possible state of things that it describes, constituting thus the propositional sign in the proposition or effective representation of a state of things. Nevertheless, the distinction that Wittgenstein traces between thought as a mental or psychological fact, and thought as a constituent activity of meaning, is a distinction between two irreducible levels that correspond with the Schopenhauerian distinction between the transcendental subject and the things in the world that it constitutes as objects of knowledge.

The other point of divergence lies in the fact that the Wittgensteinian subject is unable to be represented in a more radical sense than the Schopenhauerian transcendental subject. The idea of the subject is postulated by the latter as the necessary foundation of knowledge, since it defines the *a priori* conditions of every representation, that is to say, of every object. Subject and object are conceived as correlative terms of the cognitive relationship, in the following sense: since all possible knowledge is of objects given in the forms of space, time and causality, and these forms are *a priori*, it is necessary to postulate a foundation that is external to the object – that is, to the world as representation – as a necessary condition of it. Such a foundation is the knowing subject that Schopenhauer characterizes as ‘the supporter of the world’ (*WWR*, I, § 2, 5).

Schopenhauer flatly affirms that the subject cannot be known, because it cannot be given as an object. However, when conceiving it as a necessary condition of knowledge, he thinks of it by reference to the object, and, to that extent, it can be said that in some way he objectifies it. There is a latent tension in the claim to determine it as an *a priori* condition of the object – which implies rejecting that it may itself be an object of knowledge – while, at the same time, refusing that such a determination is a genuine ‘representation’.

If, from this point of view, we compare Wittgenstein’s metaphysical subject with the Schopenhauerian subject, what attracts one’s attention is that Wittgenstein no longer thinks of the subject as the correlate of something as an object. The absence of correlation is preserved by the characterization of the subject as ‘a limit of the world’. Indeed, the limit of a thing (let’s say, the limit of A) does not limit with A. Only something beyond the limit of A limits with A. This is what happens to the Schopenhauerian subject: as the presupposition of the world that it is, it falls beyond it. Wittgenstein affirms, simply that the subject ‘does not

belong to the world' (TLP 5.632). Comparing the subject/world relationship with the eye/visual field relationship illustrates this difference well: the eye does not belong to the visual field, but, as a limit of it, it does not seem correct to assert that it lies beyond it.

By characterizing the metaphysical subject as a limit of the world, Wittgenstein abandons the conception of the subject as 'the thinking, presenting subject' (TLP 5.631) of the modern epistemological tradition. We can find such a conception materialized both in the Cartesian *ego cogitans*, or thinking substance that has representations or ideas, and in the de-substantialized I that Hume describes as a 'bundle of perceptions'. The transcendental interpretation of the thinking I made by Kant and by Schopenhauer himself undertakes the de-objectification of the thinking subject, since it denies the possibility of there being representations of it, and redirects his concept from the sphere of representation or content to the sphere of form or the condition of possibility of every representation. But in that same de-objectification, there is a residual objectification. For, at the same time that it is affirmed that the subject cannot be an object, there remains a non-objective quasi-representation of the subject as a condition of the object, and, to that degree, the subject is objectified as the 'subject'. Wittgenstein parts company with precisely this residual objectification. His assertion that 'there is no such thing' as the subject that thinks and has representations (TLP 5.361), could imply that the metaphysical subject of the *Tractatus* is not a 'subject' in the sense of the modern epistemological tradition, as it cannot be conceived as a correlate of the world.

3. The Resolution of Solipsism

Wittgenstein has the metaphysical subject play a role in the resolution of the problem of solipsism. If we now make an abstraction of the way Wittgenstein understands the proposition 'The world is my world', it could be understood in the following way: the world does not exist, only I and my mental states exist; the world is absorbed in my I; my I fills everything. This is the meaning that the metaphysical solipsist attributes to it. A presupposition of such an interpretation is that the terms 'world' and I designate objects (what the solipsist denies is precisely that the world exists as an object facing the I).

According to Wittgenstein, solipsism is based on an error as I and 'world' are not names, they do not designate objects (therefore, they cannot be part of facts nor, in consequence, can they be 'represented' by

language). The solipsist cannot give I and 'world' the meaning that he seeks to give them, hence his proposition 'The world is my world' fails by trying to mean something that cannot be said.

However, Wittgenstein considers that 'what solipsism *means*, is quite correct' (TLP 5.62), although it is expressed obscurely. What is there that is correct behind solipsism? No more, no less than the idea that there cannot be *another* world other than that which I see, I understand, etc.; because, if there were, it would be the idea of a world that is necessarily beyond my world and an idea to which I could not give any meaning, for which reason it is nonsensical. This is what is there is of truth behind the solipsist's proposition 'the world is my world'.

Wittgenstein takes possession of this idea, but gives it a slant, not only different, but opposite to that given by the solipsist (opposite, because solipsism's undoing as regards anti-realism, or its coincidence with realism, follows from Wittgenstein's interpretation). The meaning that he attributes to 'The world is my world' is based on the idea that the I of 'my world' is not an object, it is not the psychological I of solipsism, but the metaphysical *I* that does not belong to the world, but is rather a limit of it. We have already pointed out the comparison that Wittgenstein makes between this I and the eye (cf. TLP 5.633): just as the eye cannot see itself, though the existence of the visual field *shows* the coordination of the eye with it, the I that is the limit of the world can neither be represented nor stated, but the coordination of the world with it can be *shown*.

Where and how is such coordination shown between the I and the world, that is to say, where is it shown that 'the world is *my* world' (TLP 5.62)? In the language. Or, more precisely, is it shown in that '*the limits of my language mean the limits of my world*' (TLP 5.6). But, why is it shown there? Because 'logic fills the world' (TLP 5.61), that is, it establishes the limits of the possible: there cannot be *another* world that is illogical (a world we can think of outside logic), neither can there be *another* language that is illogical (a language that has meaning because, if not, it would not be a language, but outside logic). Now, this is like saying: there can only be *one* logical language; or it is like saying that all natural languages are a single language: 'the language which I understand' (TLP 5.62). And, for the same reason, there can only be *one* logical world: the world that can be expressed in this language.

In consequence, *my* language is *the* language, not because it is

private, as the solipsist thinks (private from the world, since the world does not exist, or only exists as the content of my consciousness, of my psychological I), but, on the contrary, because it is the language that *anyone* can understand; and *my* world is *the* world, because it is the only world that can be expressed in language. 'Here we see that solipsism strictly carried out coincides with pure realism. The I in solipsism shrinks to an extensionless point and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it' (TLP 5.64).

Some comparisons should be established between Wittgenstein and Schopenhauer's strategies regarding the problem of solipsism, based on the following considerations.

Schopenhauer approaches the topic of solipsism from two different perspectives: that of representation and that of will. From an epistemological point of view, solipsism is 'the last stronghold of scepticism' (*WWR*, I, § 19, 104). The solipsist denies the reality of the external world on the basis that it cannot be proven that the representation that the subject has of the world has an objective and external cause to the knowing subject, and thence concludes that the world is a mere representation by the subject, this being the only thing that has a reality in itself. Schopenhauer's objection to solipsism – an objection that he also extends to realism and the idealism – is that it makes the conceptual mistake of conceiving knowledge as a causal relationship. A causal relationship can only occur between objects of knowledge – the relationship of causality is the essential form of every object – and the object necessarily presupposes the subject as its first condition, which is why there cannot be a cause and effect relationship between them (cf. *WWR*, I, § 5). There is a radical asymmetry between the transcendental quality of the knowing subject and the empirical statute of the known object. This also holds for self-knowledge: the I is not known as a subject, but only as an object. For his part, Wittgenstein also brings into play a metaphysical notion of the I in his interpretation of the proposition 'The world is *my* world', in answer to solipsism.

But elsewhere Schopenhauer also formulates (cf. *WWR*, I, § 19) a specific, perhaps more relevant, argument against solipsism, that can be summarized as follows: we have double knowledge of ourselves, as representation and as will; on this basis, the solipsist infers from the fact that his own I is the only object *known* by him as representation and as being in itself, the consequence that *there is not* any other object that, in

addition to being his representation, has reality in itself. But such a conclusion is invalid and only attests to his 'theoretical egoism' (*WWR*, I, § 19, 104). Although Schopenhauer recognizes that this position is not theoretically refutable, he goes for a kind of pluralism or metaphysical egalitarianism, according to which the two aspects under which my I is given – as phenomenon and as thing-in-itself – can be extrapolated to every object. This is what he is saying when he proclaims 'the identity of macrocosm and microcosm' (*WWR*, II, §41, 486), a formula that might throw some light on this statement by Wittgenstein 'Man is the microcosm: I am my world' (NB 12.10.16, 84e. Cf. TLP 5.62).

The identification of the I with the macrocosm – or, overcoming solipsism in a type of metaphysical realism – does not occur in Schopenhauer via knowledge, but through the will. The knowing subject comprehends itself as representation, as a phenomenon subjected to the conditions of space-time and causality, and, to that extent, as an individual. Solipsism's vision of itself moves within the limits of the world as representation. That vision can only transcend itself if the subject notices that there is something in itself that constitutes his true being and that is not phenomenon: something that is 'in itself' that presents itself to him as will, not as intellect, and that it is not temporary and personal, but eternal and impersonal. That noumenic I which identifies itself with macrocosm cannot be represented, there cannot be any intuition of it because it is outside space and time (in this sense, Schopenhauer characterizes it as 'the dark point in consciousness' [*WWR*, II, §41, 491]). But it is possible to conceive it as essentially identical to nature in its totality.

It is worthwhile wondering to what extent this vision of Schopenhauer's underlies the following annotation by Wittgenstein: 'This is the way I have travelled: Idealism singles men out from the world as unique, solipsism singles me alone out, and at last I see that I too belong with the rest of the world, and so on the one side *nothing* is left over, and on the other side, as unique, *the world*. In this way idealism leads to realism if it is strictly thought out.' (NB 15.10.16, 85e. Cf. TLP 5.64)

4. The Will and the World

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein denies that there is any logical connection between the will and the world: 'The world is independent of my will' (TLP 6.373). The meaning of this assertion becomes clearer if it is read in

the light of certain observations in the *Notebooks* of 1916, and both contexts are read with reference to the Schopenhauerian distinction between will and representation. Let us see.

In the notes made on 4.11.16, Wittgenstein considers the possibility of contemplating a deliberate action (for example, my action of getting up from the armchair) from two perspectives: (a) as my act of will in moving the armchair, and (b) as my act of will in moving my body. There is, however, an evident asymmetry between (a) and (b): my will seems to be directly connected to the movement of my body, but it would be strange to think that the movement of the armchair directly obeys my will.

However strange it may seem that my will should be the cause of the armchair's movement, it must also seem strange that it is the cause of the deliberate movement of my body. Why? Because the causal relationship is a contingent connection, and the idea of the action of getting up itself, as a *deliberate* action, involves my perceiving such an action as *compelled* (*gezwungene*) by my will. Now, this supposes 'removing' the will from the world, or conceiving it as a limit – not as a part – of the world. To that end, Wittgenstein establishes there a distinction between the concepts of 'will' and 'desire':

a) 'Desire' is a fact that precedes action as cause precedes effect; if action follows desire – or accompanies the action – such an accompanying is 'accidental' (*zufällig*) (NB 4.11.16, 88e). It is one thing to desire, and another to satisfy the desire: both facts are logically independent.

b) In contrast, 'the act of the will is not the cause of the action but is the action itself' (ib., 87e). What Wittgenstein means by this is that volition is not something that is *connected* to the action (as it is considered by psychology, for example), but rather the action itself perceived in a totally different way: for example, as something for which I feel responsible. This form of perception is the one I have with respect to the movement of my body, but not with respect to the movement of the armchair. Such a difference may describe thus: 'My wish relates to the movement of the chair, my will to a muscular feeling.' (ib., 88e).

If the act of will is an act that constrictively accompanies the action, then the relationship between the will and the world is not internal to the world, but external: 'The will is an attitude of the subject to the world.' (ib., 87e), and the world is that which clashes with the will and opposes it.

In this double consideration of intentional behaviour by reference, respectively, to 'wishing' and to 'willing' as situated in irreducible spheres, it is possible to glimpse the Schopenhauerian distinction between representation and will. Schopenhauer states that the body is given in two entirely different ways to the subject of knowing, in the first place, 'as representation, as an object among objects, liable to the laws of objects. But it is also given in quite a different way, namely as what is known immediately to everyone, and is denoted by the word will.' (WWR, I, § 18, 100). When we explain an action as being based on motives (for example, a wish), we locate the action and the wish on the plane of representation, that is, we consider them as objects that are related to each other causally. But this knowledge does not reveal the true meaning of his intentional behaviour to the subject that is only given when the subject perceives his bodily action as an immediate manifestation of the will. In such a case, 'the act of will and the action of the body are not two different states objectively known, connected by the bond of causality; they do not stand in the relation of cause and effect, but are one and the same thing [...] Resolutions of the will relating to the future are merely deliberations of reason about what will be willed at some time, not real acts of will. Only the carrying out stamps the resolve; till then, it is always a mere intention that can be altered; it exists only in reason, in the abstract. Only in reflection is willing and acting different; in reality they are one.' (WWR, I, § 18, 100-101). Wittgenstein will say: 'Wishing is not acting. But willing is acting' (NB 4.11.16, 88e). Therefore, for both Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein, the will is not the name of some object, it is incorrect to speak of the will as the cause of the behaviour of the body, and an act of will and a corresponding movement of the body are not two different processes, but the same thing considered from different aspects.

However, there still exists a relevant divergence: according to Schopenhauer, we have direct, intuitive knowledge – not scientific – of the will in its corporal manifestation (after all, the will is the world, seen from another perspective); Wittgenstein, on the other hand, denies all knowledge of the will, since it is external to the world, and the only possible knowledge is that which natural science offers of the world.

5. Ethics and the Willing Subject

Wittgenstein links ethics to the discovery of a deeper dimension of the world than that which belongs to the sphere of representation and can be expressed in language. Such a condition is that 'the world must thereby become quite another' (TLP 6.43), not because it changes something inside the world, but because the limits of the world change and the world reveals itself as being completely another.

A change of this nature also presupposes a metaphysical subject that is not part of the world that, as the bearer of value, is a condition of 'the sense of the world' (TLP 6.41). In the *Notebooks*, this subject is denominated 'the willing subject' (NB 2.8.16, 79e). It could be said that meaning enters the world through two different methods of projection: thought and the will. Both are outside the world, but, just as the metaphysical I that makes the meaning of language possible is an impersonal I, the willing subject is a personal I ('my will', TLP 6.373) and a real I: 'The thinking subject is surely mere illusion. But the willing subject exists' (NB 5.8.16, 80e).

It remains significant that, for Wittgenstein, the willing subject 'is not an object' (NB 7.8.16, 80e), and that he considers that the value-bearing will is not 'the will as a phenomenon' (TLP 6.423). Both points agree with the Schopenhauerian conception of the will. The specific meaning that Wittgenstein gives to the will – as well as the possible analogies that can be established with Schopenhauer – can be traced in the concatenation of the following theses:

(a) 'The sense of the world must lie outside of the world... *In* it there is no value' (TLP 6.41).

(b) The will is 'the bearer of good and evil' (NB 21.7.16, 76e), but is so as far as it 'is not part of the world, but a boundary of the world' (NB 2.8.16, 79e).

(c) Good and evil will are attitudes of the subject with regard to the world as a whole (cf. NB 4.11.16, 87e).

(d) The goodness or wickedness of the world have nothing to do with how the world is, but with what it is; that is to say, they do not alter the facts of the world, but the limits of the world (TLP 6.43).

(e) That change is shown in the resolution of life in the world: 'The world and life are one' (TLP 5.621).

(f) The solution to the problem of life – when it stops being problematic – is given for those that live, not in time, but in eternity, ‘if by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present’ (TLP 6.4311).

It is worth wondering about the possible Schopenhauerian matrix of these of Wittgenstein’s thoughts. To find an answer, the following observations may be useful.

(1) Schopenhauer distinguishes two *visions of the world* that are irreducible between themselves: as representation and as will. Wittgenstein, for his part, distinguishes between the world as ‘the totality of facts’ (TLP 1.1), from which ‘we make to ourselves pictures’ (TLP 2.1), and the world just as ‘it is *given* me’ (NB 8.7.16, 74e) being the world to which my will gains access ‘completely from outside as into something that is already there’ (ibid.).

(2) The analogy extends to two possible *ways of thinking about the will*. Schopenhauer points out that the will becomes objectified as a phenomenon in the body, and thus it is possible to represent it as an object (this is the way, for example, that psychology considers it when it explains acts of will as the effects of motives, that is, as objects causally connected to other objects). However, it is only when we feel it as the deepest essence of ourselves and the world, that we capture the will as a source of all value (which is the only consideration of interest to philosophy). Wittgenstein, for his part, establishes a radical distinction between the will as a phenomenon or part of the world – a consideration that does not interest philosophy, but psychology (TLP 6.423) – and the will as ‘the bearer of ethics’ (NB 5.8.16, 80e), which does not belong to the world. And, mentioning Schopenhauer explicitly, states: ‘It would be possible to say (à la Schopenhauer): It is not the world as *Idea* (*Vorstellung*) that is either good or evil; but the willing subject’ (NB 2.8.16, 79e).

(3) Both trace a distinction between two possible *attitudes of the I with regard to the world* that we can call the objectifying attitude and the attitude of identification with the world. In Schopenhauer, the first of these responds to the ‘ordinary way of considering things’, characteristic of knowledge as representation, which considers ‘the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things’ (*WWR*, I, § 34, 178), tracing the relationships between objects in conformity with the principle of reason. But there is another possible attitude to the world, more elevated and less

common, that occurs when the subject surrenders himself to the intuition of objects and allows his consciousness to become filled to the brim by his contemplation. When this occurs, 'we *lose* ourselves entirely in the object..., we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object' (*ibid.*). In this contemplative attitude the subject is 'pure' as long as it has become empty of all subjective content (of individuality, of will, of his temporality) and reduced to a point – a simple position of consciousness – whose whole content is the other of the I, the world, but no longer as an object. The contemplative attitude dissolves the subjectivity of the I and the objectivity of the world to the extent that both 'become one' (*WWR*, I, § 34, 179).

In Wittgenstein, we can find a apparently similar distinction to this. On the one hand, there is the attitude towards the world of science that formulates questions and offers answers about real or possible facts. The scientific attitude objectifies the world as the set of the facts that can be represented in language. On the other hand, in the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein notes a different attitude that leads to being in 'agreement' with the world (NB 8.07.1916, 75e). He considers this attitude as a precondition for a happy life, an idea that we shall return to shortly. The thing that is interesting to highlight here is that it is a way of locating oneself in the world that Wittgenstein calls 'the life of knowledge' (NB 13.08.1916, 81e), and that it leads to seeing oneself in perfect continuity with things: 'A stone, the body of a beast, the body of a man, my body, all stand on the same level. That is why what happens, whether it comes from a stone or from my body is neither good or bad' (NB 12.10.1916, 84e).

There are several possible points of convergence with Schopenhauer here: whoever adopts this attitude comes to see their own body as being situated *inside* the world, as one further object among others, and to consider whatever happens to him as lacking value, because good and evil depend on the will, which is outside the world. Moreover, seeing oneself as a being at the same level as other objects, the I can adopt an attitude of acceptance towards the world without restrictions and renounce wanting things to be this way or that, under the false supposition that they *are* good or bad. Such an attitude with respect to the world as a whole is what Wittgenstein understands by good will (cf. TLP, 6.43): that which gives meaning to the world as a bearer of value (cf. TLP 6.41).

(4) It would still be necessary to establish another analogy in the way that each man distinguishes two different *attitudes of the I with regard to*

its own temporality. Schopenhauer affirms that, when one contemplates oneself through the prism of the principle of reason, ‘the individual is only phenomenon... for this knowledge, the individual receives his life as a gift, rises out of nothing, and then suffers the loss of the gift through death, and returns to nothing. We, however, wish to consider life philosophically, that is to say, according to its Ideas, and then we shall find that neither the will, the thing-in-itself in all phenomena, nor the subject of knowing, the spectator of all phenomena, is in any way affected by birth and death.’ (*WWR*, I, § 54, 275). The reason of it rests on this: whoever lives philosophically, recognizes that ‘the present alone is the form of all life, and is its also life’s sure possession which can never be torn from it. [...] The present alone is that which always exists and stands firm and immovable (*WWR*, I, § 54, 278-279).

These very ideas resonate in the Wittgensteinian conception of the happy life as eternal or atemporal life, and of this as life in the present: ‘Only a man who lives not in time but in the present is happy. For life in the present there is no death.’ (NB 8.7.16, 74e-75e)

6. The Happy Life, Sin and Salvation

Wittgenstein says that only good or evil will can change the limits of the world. ‘The world must thereby become quite another’ (TLP 6.43). Of course, this complete conversion does not consist in transforming the world by means of the production of new facts. A change like this would only take place *within* the world – and would therefore not change it *completely*; but, moreover, this idea lacks meaning, because there is no logical connection between the will and the world that guarantees that what we want to happen will happen, therefore, if it did in fact happen, we would not be able to attribute it to our will (cf. TLP 6.374). To put it another way, the will cannot have effects within the world, since it is does not form part of it; it can only change it from outside, that is to say, as a whole.

The question, then, is not to do with changing the world, but of changing world. And this change can only happen in a change of the will that leads the I to want the world, to accept the facts in their entirety. Good will is that which wants what actually is. It is the bearer of happiness that lies in accepting the world, or of unhappiness that lies in not accepting it. But the will is the bearer of happiness or unhappiness, not as if a cause –

not like an action or an effort – but as a change in the 'I'. At this point Wittgenstein meets with Schopenhauer. 'For a blissful condition of man, it would not be by any means sufficient for him to be transferred to a "better world"; on the contrary, it would also be necessary for a fundamental change to occur in man himself... To be transferred to another world and to change one's entire nature are at bottom one and the same thing... Accordingly, here is to be found the point of contact between transcendental philosophy and ethics.' (*WWR*, II, §41, 492).

The complete change of world that Wittgenstein associates with good will may be illustrated by way of this observation in the *Notebooks*: 'It is generally assumed that it is evil to want someone else to be unfortunate. Can this be correct? Can it be worse than to want him to be fortunate?' (NB 29.7.16, 78e). Just as the correct understanding of logic depends on a way of looking at it, so Wittgenstein seems to link the correct way of living with a way of wanting it to proceed to a way of seeing the world as a whole, and breaks away from the creation of desires that are internal to the world since they are subject to accidental circumstances. It could also be expressed this way: happiness derives from an inert will that wills, but does not wish. 'And yet in a certain sense it seems that not wanting is the only good' (NB 29.7.16, 77e).

The Wittgensteinian ideal of a happy life has little to do with the old ethics that considered virtue a necessary condition of a happy life. Nor does it agree with the ordinary conception of happiness as the continuous satisfaction of our desires. What both visions have in common is what Schopenhauer called an optimistic vision of ethics, according to which happiness depends on working: he who works well is not guilty and is therefore happy. In contrast, Schopenhauer thought that there was a more original sin than the one that leads to evil acts: the guilt of being, of existing. 'Original sin is really our only true sin' (*WWR*, II, §48, 604). But that guilt is not erased by work, for to work as we should, we would have to be as we are not. What we need is to become something totally different and even opposite to what we are, 'we need a complete transformation of our nature and disposition' (*ibid.*), a salvation that produces a rebirth in us. Now, since the sin is to exist, and the principle of existence is the will to live – 'the will wills life absolutely and for all time' (*WWR*, II, §45, 568), salvation must come from detaching our will from life, from a negation of the will to live.

That negation has its roots in the comprehension of the 'inborn error' (*WWR*, II, §49, 634), according to which the destiny of human life is happiness: original, because it is consubstantial with our being, since our essence is nothing but the will to live; but finally it is an error because the whole of human existence clearly shows that our destiny is unhappiness. The spring of Schopenhauerian ethics is to rescue us from that error, to suppress the illusion of happiness that binds our will to life. But this renunciation of existence is not achieved by means of work, but by the acceptance of pain and misery, by contemplating them under a new light. An example will clarify the meaning of this: the optimist who believes in happiness as the destiny of the virtue that he puts into practice feels the suffering that accompanies life as an injustice, and tries to compensate for that injustice by venting his pain on others by means of violence or cunning. This kind of behaviour is a typical phenomenon of the will to live. In contrast, he who thinks of the misery and suffering that life has dealt him as the authentic destiny of human life, can renounce happiness and find comfort in that resignation. Such detachment from existence can be expressed in multiple ways (in asceticism, in the abandoning of any inheritance, in the search for adversity, in the renunciation of any chance privilege...) and has nothing to do with an effort of the will.

Without a question, it would be excessive to state that the happy life that Wittgenstein aspires to passes through metaphysical pessimism and the negation of the will to live in Schopenhauer's sense. But, at all events, it does pass through a renunciation of happiness conceived as the satisfaction of the desires via an acceptance of the personal destiny that life has laid out, and an attitude of resigned asceticism that would have to be indifferent to success or failure in ordinary life. Ethics, good, the truly valuable, do not seem to be marked by anything that has to do with the will conceived as an agent that intervenes in the march of the world. The happy life is characterized, rather, by an attitude of the I that can bear the misery of the world and can contemplate its joys as gifts of fortune that can be renounced (cf. NB 13.8.16). It is an open question whether in this Wittgenstein is indebted to Schopenhauer; he probably also learned it from others. But it is difficult to deny the existence of a certain family air between certain basic options and the deepest values that support their respective conceptions of ethics.

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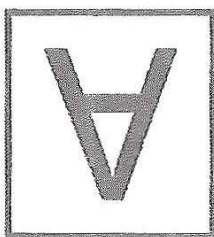
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