

# Projecting the Will on the World: Aesthetic Contemplation and the 'Schopenhauerian' Ideas

by *Violi Sabaj (London)*

## 1. Introduction

What I propose to do here is to specify how this book is to be read so as to be understood. – It aims to convey a single thought [...]. As this one thought is considered from different sides, it reveals itself respectively as what has been called metaphysics, what has been called ethics, and what has been called aesthetics; and it is only natural that it be all of these, if it really is what I claim it to be. (WR I, Pref., 5)<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this paper is to take the above claim about 'the one thought' seriously and let it guide the current inquiry into Schopenhauer's conception of aesthetic contemplation. The central claim of the paper is that aesthetic contemplation rests on what can be called Schopenhauer's 'correlation theory of cognition'.<sup>2</sup> I will argue that this theory leads him to what I call the 'projection of willing' on the world, which he uses to make his account of aesthetic contemplation meaningful without appealing to the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), which so often leads us to confusion. Arguably the boldest and most contentious proposition is that 'this one thought' is that the world is not only '*my* representation', but equally and inseparably '*my* will'. The current inquiry into aesthetic contemplation will take its bearings from the following passage, which the paper aims to clarify and render meaningful in another way than appeal to the PSR:

The only type of cognition that we *as individuals* possess is subordinate to the principle of sufficient reason, which excludes cognition of Ideas; as a result, it is certain that, if it is possible for us to raise ourselves from cognition of particular things to cognition of the Ideas, this can only take place by means of an alteration in the subject that corresponds to and is analogous with that *radical change in the whole nature of the object*, and by virtue of which the subject, in so far as it has cognition of an Idea, is no longer an individual. (WR I, 198–199; my own emphasis)

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- 1 Schopenhauer, Arthur: *The World as Will and Representation*. Volume 1 (WR I). Trans. & ed. by Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman and Christopher Janaway, New York 2010.
  - 2 I have followed Janaway's translation of *Erkenntniß* as 'cognition' as opposed to 'knowledge', which is reserved for *Wissen*; for more on the reasons for doing so see (WR I, xlix).

First, however, I will offer some background on the correlation theory of cognition. Second, I will juxtapose ordinary (or non-aesthetic) cognition to aesthetic contemplation from both sides of the correlation such that we can offer a meaningful grasp of what it means independent from the PSR, or as independent as is possible given the distinctions he made.

## 2. *Cognition, Meaning and the Will*

In his “Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will” (FW)<sup>3</sup>, Schopenhauer distinguishes between what he calls ‘consciousness of one’s *own self*, i. e., self-consciousness’ and ‘consciousness of *other things*’ (cf. FW, 37). He elaborates by arguing that the target of self-consciousness is the will, or, put differently, when we become conscious of ourselves we do so as ‘willing something’ (cf. FW, 38). Conversely, the target of consciousness of other things is ‘something’ perceived as distinct from us, independent from us or outside of us. I understand this distinction as two directions of our focus inherent to any cognition of something, i. e., they are inseparable. The previous describes the correlation theory of cognition. The following passage underpins it, but due to the approach of his inquiry he refers to them as ‘subject’ and ‘object’ instead, but in its essentials it is suggestive of the same inseparability or correlation of these two directions of focus:

But the object [*Objekt*] as such always presupposes the subject as its necessary correlate: so the subject always remains outside the jurisdiction of the principle of sufficient reason. The dispute over the reality of the external world is in fact based on this improper extension of the validity of the principle of sufficient reason to the subject: given this mistake, the dispute could make no sense, even on its own terms [...]. To insist that objects exist outside the representation of a subject – and to insist that actual objects have a being distinct from their acting – these demands are completely meaningless and contradictory. (WR I, 35)

What Schopenhauer is striving to show is that for every cognition we find two inseparable and irreducible components forming a relationship of fit. For everything we become cognizant of there is also a place from which we become cognizant of it that cannot be separated from the cognition; they fit hand in glove. Schopenhauer sought to advance his correlation theory of cognition as an alternative to what he saw as a fundamental misunderstanding of readings and conceptions of the Kantian ‘thing in itself’. He sought to defend the proposition that the thing in itself “can never be an object [*Objekt*], because an object [*Objekt*] is only its appearance and not what it really is” (WR I, 135). Let us flesh this out somewhat.

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<sup>3</sup> Schopenhauer, Arthur: Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will. In: *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics* (FW). Trans. & ed. by Christopher Janaway, New York 2009, 31–112.

We remember that, for Schopenhauer, the world that we are cognizant of is *our* representation. When we are driven to question and wonder what it is ‘in itself’, i. e., ‘independent from *us*’ and so what it might be like if we overstepped the limits of our intellect, we are left puzzled. When we wonder about that ‘something X’ (the thing in itself) with which our intellect works or that acts on our intellect and provides us with the basis for a cognition, the products of our wonder seem devoid of meaning or significance [*Bedeutung*] to *us*. This is because, he contends, we are trying to make an ‘object’ of that ‘something X’; in so doing we are left only with the shell of an object and this deprives it of meaning. The world and its objects are *my* representation. The world we perceive cannot possibly be something ‘in itself’ because to perceive a world is to stand in a relation to it, but then it is not ‘in itself’.<sup>4</sup> This inquiry leave us dissatisfied by leading us to fall back onto the same recognition we were trying to overcome, i. e., that all this is nothing but ‘*my* representation’ and that I cannot get rid of my inseparable relation to it:

[...] we are not satisfied with knowing that we have representations, that they are such and such, and that they are joined according to this or that law whose general expression is always the principle of sufficient reason. We want to know the meaning [*Bedeutung*] of those representations: we ask if this world is nothing more than representation; in which case it would have to pass over us like an insubstantial dream or a ghostly phantasm [*Luftgebilde*], not worth our notice; or in fact whether it is something else, something more, and if so, what this could be. (WR I, 123)

What drives our inquiry into the true or real nature of the world independent from us, which he calls “the *need for metaphysics* that is peculiar to man alone” (WR II, 160)<sup>5</sup>, is our dissatisfaction with the recognition that the world is *our* representation. We recognize that the world is the product of our sense-organs and their inseparable relationship and collaboration to some unknown X (cf. WR I, 23–24), which we strive to cognize to our inevitable frustration. Our inquiry comes to a halt at the recognition that the world is filled with the spatiotemporal and law-like (causal) operations of objects premised on the forces of nature that underpin or that serve as their limits. All we can say about the world is that *we* stand in an inseparable relation to it. This approach to our problem and inquiry will never satisfy us, Schopenhauer concludes, because we approach it *from the outside* (cf. WR I, 123), i. e., as “a pure subject of cognition (a winged cherub’s head without a body)” (WR I, 123–124). It is our approach and not some fact

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4 See for example, “[...] being-known of itself contradicts being-in-itself, and everything that is known is as such only phenomenon.” (WR II, 198).

5 Schopenhauer, Arthur: *The World as Will and Representation*. Volume 2 (WR II). Trans. by E. F. J. Payne, New York 1958. See also (WR II, 367–369).

that *dissatisfies* us. Instead of surpassing the ‘pure subject of cognition’ in hope to arrive at some object ‘in itself’ beyond it, we should direct our focus to it.

If our inquiry leads us to the conclusion that the world is nothing but *our* representation, then we are directing our focus entirely outside of ourselves, for Schopenhauer, but we have not lost the inseparable connection to ourselves. Without self-consciousness we could not possibly conceive of something as being ‘outside’ of *us*. A connection to *us* is preserved by the recognition that the world is *our* representation. This recognition is informative in a negative sense, i. e., it prevents us from exceeding the limits of possible cognition, but it also points us in the right direction. We have recognized the position from which the world appears as filled with objects and so on. Yet, by focusing entirely on a purportedly external object – and even by treating our body as an object – we make an error that is akin to *denial* about the position from which we cognize something. Even as pure subjects of cognition we recognize that the world is not *only* representation, **but also** *our* representation. We have not yet succeeded in plucking *our* eyes out, so to speak; but our failure to do so is also our salvation, Schopenhauer concedes. This is patent when we direct our attention to ourselves, as we *must* in certain, perhaps mundane, moments. We are disingenuous subject of cognition when we put *faith* wholly on reason and reflection, which are insufficient to show us that the world itself is also something *other than* our representation. Recognizing the previous would make us genuine pure subjects of cognition. Yet, to recognize what the world is *other than* our representation we require reason *and* something else, not reason on its own. This ‘something else’ is demonstrated to us in moments when we *react* to something, i.e. to those cognitions that affect us in such a way as to move our body and so become *motives for us*.

We assume that we have a purely objective stance on the world, i. e., independent from its subjective correlate, but we deceive ourselves, for Schopenhauer. As Kofler rightly claims:

“Pure” subject of cognition does *not* mean a subject without object. This is Schopenhauer’s foundation of transcendental idealism that subject and object are correlatives.<sup>6</sup>

Every cognition has its subjective correlate. Recognizing this, in fact, opens up a doorway to another truth about what the world is *other than our* representation, i. e., that “the world is my will” (WR I, 24). Schopenhauer devotes his attention to this other truth, but, we should add, only after he has demonstrated and argued at length that the concept of an ‘object in itself’ is devoid of meaning:

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6 Kofler, Matthias: The Artist as Pure Subject of Cognition. In: *A Companion to Schopenhauer*. Ed. by Bart Vandenabeele, Oxford 2012, 193–205.

For the world is, on the one side, completely *representation*, just as it is, on the other side, completely *will*. However, a reality that would be neither of these, but rather an object in itself (and unfortunately this is what Kant's thing in itself has surreptitiously degenerated into) is a fantastic absurdity [*erträumtes Unding*] and to assume such a thing is a philosophical will-o'-the-wisp. (WR I, 25)

To dispel this absurdity, he argues, we should remember the position from which the world appears as filled with objects. We should reflect on, or direct our focus to *ourselves* in such moments, which is the only place left to look once we have exhausted our reflection of things 'outside of us'. An *embodied reaction* to something demonstrates to us that the world appears as filled with objects if, and only if, we are preoccupied with our individuality. An object is perceived *as an object* because only objects *can* become *targets* or *motives* of our individual will. When we bring our focus back to ourselves, as happens when we are strongly affected by something, we find that the subjective correlate of our cognition of the world is our approaching it *as individuals*. In such moments, we notice the significance or meaning of a world filled with objects; we must perceive the world in this way when we assume the position of an *individual*. This demonstrates to us the significance of the correlation between 'how our world appears' and 'to whom it appears so' that seemed so unyielding when we sought to cognize the 'thing in itself'.

What does it mean to be an individual and be "rooted in this world" (WR I, 124), for Schopenhauer? He contends that individuality stems from the 'special relation' to one of the many 'objects' we cognize in the world:

The subject of cognition is an individual precisely because of this special relation with the one body that, aside from all this, is only a representation like any other. (WR I, 128)

The one body that Schopenhauer refers to is our own body, and the special relation is our willing something, which is always through the body because,

[w]illing and doing are different only for reflection: in actuality they are one. Every true, genuine and immediate act of will is instantly and immediately also the appearance of an act of the body. (WR I, 125)

Our body is not *only* an object among objects, but likewise identical with our willing or doing something. The difference between our willing and cognizing for Schopenhauer is that in willing something we perceive an *identity* relationship between our will and body, but *not* a *causal* relationship as we perceive with all other objects in the world:

An act of the will and an act of the body are not two different states cognized objectively, linked together in a causal chain, they do not stand in a relation of cause and effect; they are one and the same thing, only given in two entirely different ways: in one case immediately and in the other case to the understanding in intuit-

tion. An action of the body [*Aktion des Leibes*] is nothing but an objectified act of will, i. e. an act of will that has entered intuition. (WR I, 124–125)

We are individuals, for him, when we ‘will something’ and this evidences a different relationship to one of the objects in the world that is not *just* causal, but equally and inseparably an identity relationship.<sup>7</sup> In other words, our body, the object it responds to and the world appears different when *we will something* or *find something to will*. The world seems meaningful when we *identify* with something in it; in most cases and by default (but not always, as we will see below) what we identify with is *our own body*.

The world *appears to us* as filled with objects because of our approach to it as *individuals that look for something to will*; the latter characterises the *dissatisfied* pure subject of cognition or the ‘metaphysical need’. The subjective correlate to the world filled with objects is *our* willing (or doing) something. There is an identity or a by-fit relationship between *our* willing something and representation of a world filled with objects. It must be so, for Schopenhauer, or our own body would only ever appear as an object, but, at least in some moments, it does not. We react to, desire or strive after objects through our body and in doing so an object appears meaningful *to us* in a way that is not encapsulated in a causal account. It is a matter of fact that our relationship to our own body is *distinct in kind* from our relationship to foreign bodies that do not (in some sense) come into contact with it and so become part of our will, i. e., are incorporated into it. Understanding this distinction, I want to argue, is crucial for rendering meaningful his conception of aesthetic contemplation and the true status of the Schopenhauerian ‘Idea’.

The correlation between subject and object suggests that the world itself (as opposed to ‘something’ in it) appears different to those immersed in aesthetic contemplation than it does to those immersed in the ordinary tumult of their urges and needs.<sup>8</sup> In aesthetic contemplation we experience the same correlation between subject and object as in any cognition of something. But the sense of ‘object’ in the ‘object of aesthetic contemplation’ is different from the sense of ‘object’ in the ‘object of non-aesthetic cognition’.<sup>9</sup> We can distinguish ‘objects’

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7 For more on the relationship between what I call the ‘causal’ and ‘identity’ relationship, and why Schopenhauer relies on one over the other, see Koßler, Matthias: Life is but a Mirror: On the Connection between Ethics, Metaphysics and Character in Schopenhauer. In: *European Journal of Philosophy* 16:2 (2008), 230–250. Koßler’s reading offers a wealth of insight into Schopenhauer’s philosophical manoeuvres at the intersection between metaphysics, aesthetics and ethics.

8 Something similar is the case about the world of the moral genius, though I cannot defend nor demonstrate this here.

9 I am grateful to Bart Vandenabeele for pressing me to clarify this distinction. One suggestion made by Vandenabeele is to look at the difference between *Objekt* and *Gegenstand* in Schopenhauer’s usage. Alas, after much labor, I have found that Schopenhauer too often uses the two interchangeably, e. g.: “a child learns to have intuitions by comparing the impressions of the same

in the broad and narrow sense. The broad sense refers to the subject-matter or the target of our cognition (or of willing), i. e., to the ‘something X’ we are focusing or directing our attention towards. This sense does not imply the *kind* of relationship *we* as subjects of cognition have to it, only that we have *some* relationship to it; we can call it the abstract sense. The narrow (or the more concrete) sense of ‘object’, refers to the *kind* of relationship we have to it. We cognize something as an ‘object’ in the narrow sense if we relate to it in such a way as that it *can* relate to our will (i. e., it can yield a motive). Thus, it is an ‘object’ in this sense if it can be utilized by *us* towards some end we may have or are looking for. In this sense, the ‘object’ has the status of a tool in a tool-box and is seen as tool in the tool-box. In both senses we take an interest ‘in something’, but the *kind* of interest differs. Accordingly, the difference between the two senses of ‘object’ does not rest *solely* on the target of our cognition, nor *solely* on our approach to it, but on the *relation* between *us* and *the target*. It is for this reason that we should read the subject-object correlation as a by-fit relationship. Henceforth, and for clarity, I will use ‘object’ to refer to the narrow sense and ‘target’ to refer to the broad sense.

The insight presented to us by the correlation theory of cognition is that we do not take *only one kind* of interest in the targets of our cognition, i. e., as something that we can utilize or that permits action upon it, or the kind of interest premised on our own individual will, urges and needs. There are other kinds of interest we can take in something. Where the proposition shows its novelty is that how something appears changes in accordance with the *kind* of interest we take in it. Some targets of cognition can change our interest by their independent effect on us, but the key claim is that unless our interest changes, our *perception* of it does not no matter how effective it is said to be or it appears to be (or supposedly is) *for others*.

How, then, does the above discussion relate to aesthetic contemplation? The correlation theory of cognition shows us, I believe, that what gives the targets of our cognition meaning is the position from which we focus on them. What

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object [*Objekt*] received by the various senses; how in fact this is the only thing that sheds light on so many sensory phenomena such as seeing a single image with two eyes; or the experience of double vision when squinting or when viewing objects [*Gegenstände*] at different distances from the eye in a single glance” (WR I, 33). It is hard to distinguish one use from another in the previous passage. Yet, there are other passages where the case for a difference finds a firmer foothold: “it would therefore be absurd to demand that they be established through experience (if by this is meant the real world outside of us, itself an intuitive representation) or brought before the eyes or the imagination like objects [*Objekte*] of intuition. Concepts can only be thought, not intuited, and only the effects that people bring about through concepts are objects [*Gegenstände*] of experience proper” (WR I, 62). It is difficult to expect terminological consistency from Schopenhauer at this level of analysis. I have therefore decided to suggest a distinction between ‘object’ in the broad and narrow sense premised on other distinctions and arguments he makes.

makes the world meaningful is that we are more than the ‘representing’ subject; we are, in fact, looking for something to will. The pure subject of cognition lives in a world that appears foreign, empty, and detached, i. e. an object among objects, whilst its ‘willing something’ makes it appear meaningful or significant to the subject. The subject is not purely cognizing a world filled with objects, but *is* searching for *something to will*. The world appears meaningless, because in that precise moment we are not *reacting* to something through our body. What we notice when we do react to something is that our perception of the target is still a perception of it *as an object*, or as something that ‘permits willing’. There is therefore a distinction in degree between the sensation that is the subjective correlate of an intuition (i.e. the basis of all of our perceptions and the concepts that arise from them, e. g., let’s say an apple) and the more *powerful* or *destabilizing* sensation that is the subjective correlate of the *same* object (the apple as it is appears when we are *hungry* or desire it) now perceived as a *motive* [*Motiv*].<sup>10</sup> Objects are the kinds of target of our cognition *that can be* motives for our will even if they are not so *now*.

Schopenhauer does not stop there, however. He wants to demonstrate that what we perceive can have significance or meaning in another way that is not encapsulated by ‘objects’ and their more *effective* siblings, i. e., ‘motives’; that is, through aesthetic contemplation. There is purportedly a difference in *kind* between an object (and-or a motive) and an ‘Idea’. Nevertheless, we immediately notice a problem with this proposition. If the ‘will’ is what gives meaning to the target of our cognition, then the aesthetic contemplator is likewise ‘willing something’ or the Ideas she purportedly perceives are as *meaningless* as the ‘object in itself’ that he so vehemently rejects and constitutes the foundations of his philosophy. The proposition that disinterested subjects are actually *interested* is something we have to swallow. Though, I will argue, it is easier to swallow if, like we saw with the two conceptions of ‘object’, there is a broader and a narrower sense of ‘will’. The sense in which we should read the aesthetic contemplator’s ‘will’ is in the broad sense, i.e., as the necessary correlate to making something *meaningful*, rather than suggestive of what ‘we’ (as individuals or humans) will in some object, i. e., its meaning *to us*. If the previous is the case, then we

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<sup>10</sup> Schopenhauer unfortunately only intimates this relation between a sensation that yields cognition of an object and the sensation that yields cognition of a ‘motive’ most clearly in his discussion of the relation between light and beauty. In any case, the presuppositions for it are laid out in the will-body identity: “Just as a human being is dark and vehement impulse [*Drang*] of willing (signified by the pole of the genitals as the focal point of willing) and at the same time eternal, free, serene [*beiter*] subject of pure cognition (signified by the pole of the brain), similarly and corresponding to this contrast, the sun is a source of both light, the condition for the most perfect type of cognition, and for precisely this reason the most joyful [*erfreulichste*] of things, – and heat, the primary condition for all life, i. e. of all appearance of the will on its higher levels. Thus, what heat is for the will, light is for cognition (WR I, 227).



should jettison the proposition that an Idea is *distinct in kind* from an object (and-or motive) and flesh out what their difference hinges on.

There are conceptual knots in what Schopenhauer says about the Ideas that need untying. I hope to at least prepare the ground for our addressing them by inviting us to debate the issue through his correlation theory of cognition. The following questions guide my inquiry: How different is an Idea from an object or motive, and what does it hinge on? How different is a 'willing individual' from a 'disinterested individual' and what underpins it? Can we argue that the so-called disinterested individual is just 'willing differently' as opposed to 'not willing'?<sup>11</sup>

Construing the Ideas as cognition of *something* from the perspective of a 'pure subject of cognition', I will argue, can mislead us in subtle ways. This paper will focus on how construing the Ideas as 'things' or as 'something' separate from *this* dog or flower that we contemplate misleads us. I will also argue that what makes the Idea meaningful is our willing something, albeit *not* in the sense of yielding an object and-or motive. This becomes clearer as we venture into demonstrating the difference between the subject-object correlation of ordinary or non-aesthetic cognition and of aesthetic contemplation. To help us along we should bear in mind the following two correlations:

- A) Willing individual – object (is an object both in the broad and narrow sense)
- B) Disinterested Individual – Idea (is an object in the broad sense only)

'A' refers to 'non-aesthetic contemplation', whilst 'B' refers to 'aesthetic contemplation'. Both constitute the subject-object correlation foundational to 'cognition of something', but refer to different kinds of cognitions. The 'Idea' and the 'object' are both targets of our cognition and thus fall on the objective side of the subject-object correlation. Nevertheless, each is suggestive of a different relation between the subject and object (or between 'self-consciousness' and 'consciousness of other things', or between the 'will' and its 'motive'). My aim will be to make this difference meaningful and show the premises on which it rests, which we can summarize by what I will call the 'projection of the will or willing' on the target of our cognition. I will begin by juxtaposing the 'Idea' to the 'object' whilst defending the proposition that 'projecting willing' on something is what makes the Idea meaningful in its own right and independent from the PSR. I will flesh out the previous claims by starting with the objective correlate, i. e., the *Idea*, which Schopenhauer defines as the "most *adequate objecthood*

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11 Schopenhauer is open to this solution of the conceptual problem and demonstrates it clearly through his discussion of tragedy: "[...] precisely in this way we become aware that there is still left in us something different that we cannot possibly know positively, but only negatively, as that which does *not* will life" (WR II, 433).

of the will” (WR I, 197). Subsequently, I will assess the subjective side, i.e., “the pure, will-less, timeless subject of cognition” (WR I, 223) by juxtaposing it to what might be called ordinary, non-aesthetic subjective correlate.

### 3. *The Objective Correlate: Schopenhauerian Ideas and the Projection of Willing*

Aesthetic contemplation is a kind of cognition; it consists of *something* cognized (the so-called ‘Idea’) and its inseparable subjective correlate (the ‘*pure*, will-less, painless, timeless *subject of cognition*’). This serves to indicate, for Schopenhauer, that even Ideas are representations or targets of cognition. An Idea is a target of cognition, not an object fit to be utilized by us. This leaves the Idea as meaningless as an object ‘in itself’, however, which is not the conclusion that Schopenhauer wants to arrive at, or his entire philosophical project rests on the mistake of thinking that the world is something other than *my* representation. What then makes the ‘Schopenhauerian’ Idea *meaningful*? This question guides the current section.

The objective correlate of aesthetic contemplation, or ‘Idea’, is distinct from an object in one way. The target is no longer cognized in terms of its relations to others, but what it might be ‘in and of itself’. This claim is meaningless, however. What kind of cognition of something are we left with if we isolate the target of our cognition from its relations? We cannot possibly subtract all of the effects that other targets had (or will have) on it and still be left with something resembling cognition of *an object*. It is thus misleading to claim that we can (or should) separate the target from its relations *and* claim that we are left with the cognition of *an object*. We can, however, claim that we do *not* cognize an object, but an Idea. What we are left with now is the ostensibly easier challenge of making sense of Ideas without appeal to objects and what pertains to them. How do we make the claim that aesthetic contemplation involves cognition of an Idea meaningful without appeal to objects?

Schopenhauer’s proposition is that we no longer construe the target of our cognition as synonymous or identical with its relations and effects; we do not *identify* the stone or dog with these relations. They *sink* to the background or are rendered out of focus. This does not entail that they no longer exist, nor that we somehow perceive another ‘object’ we call an ‘Idea’. We are misled if we construe Ideas as ‘objects’ rather than ‘targets’ of cognition and so by confounding the two uses of ‘object’ we distinguished above. The Idea, I will argue, is what the target *wills to be*; we project the will onto it. What we perceive, or at least try to and frustratingly fail, is what the target of our cognition *wills to be*. It is the same target we perceive whilst the nature of our perception has changed. The target’s relations to other targets are suspended from focus and so their nature has changed; they are not ‘obliterated’ nor have they ‘vanished’. The dog is not

replaced by another thing we call the ‘Idea’ of a dog. We perceive the *same* dog, albeit in a different manner and this, as Vandenebeele rightly claims, “enables us to become alive to usually unnoticed significant features”<sup>12</sup>. What allows us to be attentive in this way is our treating the dog not *as an object* (or a motive), but as ‘willing’ in an extended sense.

What Schopenhauer aims to show is that when we aesthetically contemplate something we apply to it the same relationship we have to our own body: the double cognition we have of it as will [*Wille*] and representation [*Vorstellung*]. This cognition underpins Schopenhauer’s propositions about aesthetic contemplation:

We now clearly understand our double cognition of the essence and operation of our own body, a cognition that we are given in two completely different ways; and we will go on to use this cognition as a key to the essence of every appearance in nature; and when it comes to objects other than our own body, objects that have not been given to us in this double manner but only as representations in our consciousness, *we will judge them on the analogy with our body, assuming* that, since they are on the one hand representations just like the body and are in this respect homogeneous with it, then on the other hand, what remains after disregarding their existence as representation of a subject must have the same inner essence as what we call *will*. (WR I, 129; emphasis added)<sup>13</sup>

What makes the Idea meaningful, for Schopenhauer, is that we no longer perceive the target of our cognition *as an object*, but as a willing thing that has a similar relationship to *its* body as we do. Koßler likewise rightly recognizes how the focus is shifted from ourselves to the target during aesthetic contemplation:

[...] the only way to perceive things not in relation to the own interest is to contemplate them as creating their relations to other things and to the perceiver by themselves.<sup>14</sup>

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12 Vandenebeele, Bart: Aesthetic Disinterestedness in Kant and Schopenhauer. In: *Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics* 49:1 (2012), 45–70; 59.

13 Schopenhauer clarifies this further in a later passage: “[...] every individual is on the one hand the cognitive subject, i.e. the complementary condition for the possibility of the whole objective world, and on the other hand a single appearance of the will, which is precisely what objectifies itself in every thing. But this duality of our essence does not remain in a self-subsisting unity: otherwise we would be able to be aware of ourselves *in ourselves and independent of the objects of cognition and willing*: but this is absolutely impossible” (WR I, 304; footnote). Therefore, only when we will something do we become self-conscious, for Schopenhauer. Moreover, it is only in self-consciousness and so following our willing something that the target of our cognition acquires significance and meaning [*Bedeutung*]. What then, is the significance or meaning of the Idea, and how does it acquire it if we assume the standpoint of pure, will-less subjects of cognition, i. e., ‘winged cherub’s heads without a body’? This is perhaps the crux of his philosophical problem.

14 Koßler, *Artist as Subject*, 200.

We project the will on it and this permits us to no longer perceive a world filled with objects etc., but with willing things. This, for Schopenhauer, requires an inference by ‘analogy’ and thus reason.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, to perceive indirectly what cannot be directly perceived we likewise require imagination, because no target of cognition is perceived as ‘will’ in itself. Even our own will is not perceived as it is *in itself*, but through our acts of will over time. We notice, then, that Schopenhauer does not escape the Kantian limits placed upon cognition. Even the cognition of the will must accord with the subject-object correlation:

I do not have cognition of my will as a whole, in its unity, in perfect accordance with its essence; rather I cognize it only in its individual acts, which is to say in time, time being the form in which my body (like every other object) appears: this is why the body is the condition of *cognition* of my will. (WR I, 126; emphasis added)

We do not have direct access to ‘the will’ through our body, but an indication of it through an act of will over time. What is immediate for us is the identity relationship between our will and body demonstrated by an act of will, not the cognition of the will, which is always mediated by time. It is this identity relationship that does not permit us to claim that our will is an object. When the will is made an object it is of the same kind as any other object of our cognition. To perceive our will as an object is to perceive a causal relationship rather than an identity relationship between the will and the action. An act of will is not an inference or the recognition of a causal relation between two distinct things, but an identity relationship between the will and the ‘object through which it expresses itself’, i.e., the body, which thus makes it *our* body.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, we recognize the *identity* relationship between the will and body when acting wilfully or through acts of will.

Our acts of will stand closer to us or we identify with them more clearly than anything else we perceive as ‘*our* representation’ or as an ‘object’. If we only ever perceived our acts of will as our representation, then our life would unfold like a movie whose director is some strange unknown thing X, rather than *us*. Notice, however, that though we do *not* make an inference from our will to our body, we do make an inference from our act of will to our character; our character is a construct of reason based on the will-body identity. We use our motives as pieces of a puzzle presenting our character, not as constituting our *whole* character; reason is required to unify these pieces into a *whole* picture. ‘To will’ is different

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15 Schopenhauer claims that an Idea is “made possible by the unification of imagination and reason” (WR I, 63), so we can claim that it at least partially requires an inference. The role of reason in this inference by analogy is evident in his claim that the double cognition “can only be established by raising immediate consciousness, concrete cognition, to rational knowledge or transferring it to abstract cognition” (WR I, 127).

16 For more on the will-body identity and ‘the act of will’ see Koßler, *Artist as Subject*, 194–195.

from ‘to cognize’, but their difference collapses when and only when ‘we *will* something’. In aesthetic contemplation, we make an inference from the target of our cognition to its being a willing thing just as we are premised on the fact that we sometimes cognize our body as an object among objects. I believe this inference is what he refers to when he claims that we should judge the targets of our cognition on the analogy with our own body (cf. WR I, 129). We use our relationship to our body as the basis for the analogy, and make the leap that allows us to *assume* that the target *appears as an object to us*, but ‘in itself’ *it wills much like we* do. The latter is the condition or ground of our no longer cognizing ‘objects’, but ‘Ideas’.

In aesthetic contemplation, the target of cognition is not perceived as an object, but as willing like we are; we project the will on it. This changes of our perception of it qualitatively rather than quantitatively. We do not perceive something ‘else’ or ‘more’ when we perceive the dog’s Idea; we perceive the same dog differently. We do not lose the connection to the target of our cognition, but there is a *qualitative* change in the target that does not entail or presuppose a change in ‘it itself’ and *independent* from us; another person may still see ‘just another dog’.

Schopenhauer grounds aesthetic contemplation on the kind of cognition made possible by the projection of willing on the world by analogy to the double cognition we have of the body as will and representation. The projection of willing paves the way for our devoting our focus entirely to the target of our cognition.<sup>17</sup> We must *not* construe this as projection of one’s ‘individual self’ or what is specific to human willing, but of the relationship we have to our body in reacting to something deemed as (pleasant or unpleasant) to us. Our body is a bridge between us and the world we perceive. In aesthetic contemplation, we project on the targets of our cognition this same bridge, i. e., that their body and willing are *one*. Instead of perceiving them as objects causing or being caused to do something, we perceive them as pushing and pulling ‘something’, or striving after ‘something’, or overpowering rather than being overpowered by something. We

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17 The projection of the will is at the heart of Schopenhauer’s philosophy: “[...] we must learn to understand nature from ourselves, not ourselves from nature. What is directly known to us must give us the explanation of what is only indirectly known, not conversely” (WR II, 196). Yet, he is careful to make clear that ‘will’ should not be understood in the sense of human willing: “[...] anyone incapable of broadening the concept in the way we require will remain in a state of perpetual misunderstanding, using the word *will* to mean just the one species that has borne the name so far, the will that is accompanied by cognition and is expressed exclusively in accordance with motives – and indeed only through abstract motives, under the guidance of reason” (WR I, 136). The word ‘will’ can mislead his readers, but he has done enough to caution us over its use; he uses it to permit a change in what we perceive *as an object* meaningful to us in another way, i. e., as *something that wills*. If we do not grant Schopenhauer this other way of making things meaningful, and the inference by analogy he grounds it on, then his thoughts are left shrouded in an uncanny mist arguably improper to philosophy.

take a stance on them *as if they also will*. This makes the target of our cognition stand out in a different way, i. e., as the representation or image of a willing thing rather than the result of relations (causal and spatiotemporal) between objects premised on some meaningless unknown force.

By projecting the will on the target the aesthetic contemplator does not perceive it *as an object*, but as it endlessly, frustratingly strives to become, i. e., *its Idea*. The meaning of the 'Idea' is based on our (at least trying to) perceive the target 'as it is striving to be' or as 'it would be if nothing was striving against it'. It is in this sense, i. e., of seeing things as striving or struggling (i. e. willing), that the nature of our perception changes in aesthetic contemplation. The difference hinges on, I argue, projection of 'willing' on 'forces of nature', which he construes as "*qualitates occultae*" (WR I, 147). The following quotes are immensely revealing on how the nature of perception changes during aesthetic contemplation:

Everywhere in nature we see conflict, we see struggle, we see victory changing hands; later we will recognize this more clearly as the internal rupture that is essential to the will. Each level of the will's objectivation is in conflict with the others over matter, space and time [...]. In fact, this conflict is itself only the revelation of the internal rupture that is essential to the will. (WR I, 171–172)

A more perfect Idea will result from such a victory over several lower Ideas or objectivations of the will; and by absorbing an analogue of higher power from each of the Ideas it overpowers, it will gain an entirely new character: the will is objectified in a new and clearer fashion [...]. No victory without a struggle: since the higher Idea or objectivation of the will can come forward only by overpowering the lower Ideas, it encounters resistance on their part. Even when the lower Ideas are quickly brought into submission, they nonetheless keep striving to express their essence in a complete and self-sufficient manner. (WR I, 173)

We no longer perceive the target *as an object*, but as the 'outcome of *its* successful or unsuccessful *struggle*'. To perceive a target as striving, struggling, overpowering etc. is to 'project the will' on it, which means that we no longer perceive *an object*. Prior to projecting the will, all we perceive are spatiotemporal and causal relations between objects premised on meaningless 'forces of nature'. Therefore, only Ideas in Schopenhauer's sense (not objects, nor motives) have the kind of relations whose meaning rests on our relationship to our own body: overpowering something, striving for something, struggling against something.

The juxtaposition between perception of an object and that of an Idea is obscurely summarised in the following passage:

As soon as cognition, the world of representation, is suppressed, absolutely nothing is left but mere will, blind urge. The fact that it retains its objecthood and becomes representation presupposes at once both subject and object: but the fact

that this objecthood is the pure, complete and adequate objecthood of the will presupposes the object as Idea, free from the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and the subject as pure subject of cognition, free from individuality and servitude to the will. (WR I, 203)

The Idea is the most complete cognition we can have of something, but it remains a cognition of something. It is *not* the cognition of an object nor another *entity* to which the target of our cognition relates; both are only able to yield an object, not an Idea.

In sum, there is no other ‘thing’ or ‘entity’ apart from the will and its representation. We are not cognizing two distinct things called ‘Idea’ and ‘object’, but having two distinct cognitions of the same thing. Young rightly intimates that Schopenhauer does not construe the Ideas as *things*, but as a kind of perception of something,

‘Idea’ is, in his aesthetic theory, a mere *façon de parler*, a merely nominal object. The best way of putting his view is to say that what is special about the artist is not that he perceives the Idea *instead* of the individual, but rather perceives the individual *as Idea*.<sup>18</sup>

Our cognition of an Idea is thus a cognition of ‘the individual’, not some ontological entity that is ‘somehow’ distinct, but which we ‘somehow’ *perceive* in ‘this’ individual. Our whole perception of things has shifted in aesthetic contemplation, but not the connection with the target of our cognition that was previously perceived *as an object* or *motive*. Young, however, overshoots the mark when he claims that *the Idea*, is not

[...] something separate from the individual that the artist sees, but rather ‘the universal *in* the particular’ (WR II: 379; emphasis added).<sup>19</sup>

The claim that we perceive ‘the universal *in* the particular’ is not wrong, but pushes us into an unnecessarily obscure position that makes the problem return through the backdoor. Consider what meaning we can give to the above claim if it is not conceptual, i.e., under the PSR, which entails that we are not perceiving an ‘Idea’. Aesthetic contemplation does not overstep the Kantian limits for cognition in general. The relationship we have to the target when perceiving it as an Idea is as if it ‘wills’, or overpowers, or strives, or struggles and so on, which is premised on our willing something in the extended sense. We project this onto the world to saturate it with a meaning or significance *to us* in another way than its being a (possible) *motive* for our will, which is what ‘an object’ *means to us*.

Schopenhauerian Ideas are *not* Platonic Forms, they are a way of rendering meaningful what Plato called a Form in a manner different from Plato.<sup>20</sup> The

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18 Young, Julian: *Schopenhauer*. New York 2005, 132.

19 Young, *Schopenhauer*, 131.

difference is that between ‘how something appears *to us*’ and ‘what *it wills* to appear as *to us*’. The Schopenhauerian ‘Idea’ is a kind of cognition of the target. He therefore aims to sit between Kant and Plato and his reasons for doing so are summarized in the following passage, which merits quoting in full:

This is because, just as Kant claimed, the thing in itself is supposed to be free of all the forms that are attached to cognition as such: and (as will be shown in the appendix) Kant was simply mistaken in failing to consider being-an-object-for-a-subject as one of these forms, and indeed before all others, since precisely this is the first and most universal form of all appearance, i. e. representation; he *should therefore have explicitly denied that his thing in itself was an object*, as this would have saved him from that great inconsistency, an inconsistency that was discovered quite early. By contrast, *the Platonic Idea is necessarily an object, something cognized, a representation and, for precisely this reason (but for only this reason), distinct from the thing in itself*. It has merely shed the subordinate forms of appearance (which are all comprehended under the principle of sufficient reason) – or rather it has not yet entered into these forms; but it has retained the first and most general form, that of representation in general, of being an object for a subject.” (WR I, 197; my own emphasis)

He wants Plato’s insight to be wed to Kant’s epistemic boundaries. Notice that cognition of the Idea leads us to two senses of ‘individuality’ and ‘universality’ premised entirely on our now looking at the targets of our cognition differently; just as we saw with its relations. The target of cognition, *as an object*, is cognized relative to other targets of cognition seen as objects. Ordinary cognition yields an individual in the sense of an object only *functionally* separable from other objects, but relates to them by serving some ‘function’, which is as part of some wider whole. They serve different *functions* either *for us*, or *for some independent will*, e. g., for ‘Nature’ or ‘God’. They are still related to each other before relating to some independent will, because we conceive them as serving ‘some function’. This is the kind of ‘individuality’ a hammer possesses relative to a screwdriver in a ‘tool-box’, i. e., as fit for some use that the worker (i. e. the *legislator* or *owner* of the ‘wider whole’) puts it to. This is *not* the individuality or universality inherent to aesthetic contemplation. *Ideas* revise our conceptions by changing their *meaning*. We are still speaking of individuality and universality but what these *mean* under aesthetic contemplation is different from the PSR. The claim that an Idea is *another object* trying to represent itself in this individual object, e. g., a perfect ‘tool’ without a wielder is misleading and akin to what he

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20 Though, I admit, he is ambivalent about whether or not his Ideas are just Platonic Forms; he sometimes claims that he does not intend them in Plato’s sense, e. g., “given our view, we cannot agree with Plato” (WR I, 236); also, “many of his [Plato’s] examples and descriptions of Ideas are applicable only to concepts” (WR I, 259). At other times, he claims, “the *Ideas*, in my sense, which agrees with the original Platonic meaning, of this grossly misused word” (WR II, 364).



saw as the ‘object in itself’. The Idea is not *an object*. It is perceived as the outcome of a struggle between opposed willing things. Absolutely nothing about a world filled with objects and their spatiotemporal and causal relations, not even forces of nature – which under this view are *qualitates occultae* – suggests anything like a ‘struggle’. To perceive a struggle, or, put differently, to make such a perception meaningful, we have to first project what we experience in the first-person as *willing something*.

Wicks rightly reads the Ideas as premised on an “*idealizing act of the imagination*”<sup>21</sup>, but we should likewise emphasize the role of reason. Imagination is needed for intuitive representation or perception of an Idea, but reason is required to make the inference by analogy from our *own* relationship to our *own* body to the target of cognition having this same relationship. Imagination works in combination with reason to yield Ideas, rather than ‘an object’ (in itself).<sup>22</sup> He is also right to construe an Idea as *ideal*, but we must clarify that it not *our ideal for the object* nor one taken from another perspective that is other than the individual target’s own. It is what the target’s *individuality* consists of when we aesthetically contemplate it: it consists of *its willing to be this or that*. It is the latter that gives meaning to the proposition that aesthetic contemplation yields “this object’s *clearest image*” (WR I, 202; my own emphasis); though Schopenhauer should have said the ‘target’s’ rather than the ‘object’s’ clearest image to avoid confusion.

A central objection to Schopenhauer’s account of the Ideas in the literature is that aesthetic contemplation is *not* concerned with the target’s particularity, but with the ‘idea’ of which the ‘object’ is an ‘instantiation’. The worry that is voiced is that the object’s ‘particularity’ is rendered ‘irrelevant’ or ‘transcended’ by aesthetic contemplation, because the ‘Idea’ is purportedly universal whereas the target (which they dub the ‘object’) is not. This objection is clearly stated by Soll who contends that

[...] the object of an aesthetic experience is not made up of individuals, distinguished by their locations in space and time, but by the a-spatial and a-temporal *Ideas* or *Platonic Forms*, the eternal, unchanging species or types of things that all individuals exemplify.<sup>23</sup>

Notice, however, that this reading conceives of the relation between the Idea and the individual in an ontological or what might be called a speculative sense; it brings back the PSR and yields cognition of *an object*. It is thus prone to positing

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21 Wicks, Robert: *Schopenhauer*. Oxford 2008, 98.

22 For more on the cooperation of reason and imagination in aesthetic contemplation see Kofler, Artist as Subject, 201–203.

23 Soll, Ivan: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and the Redemption of Life Through Art. In: *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche’s Educator*, ed. by Christopher Janaway, Oxford 1998, 79–105; 93.

two distinct ‘things’ (one physical and one metaphysical) that somehow relate. Yet, as Hamlyn rightly remarks,

Schopenhauer is less concerned with the ontological status of the Ideas than with their logical character as representations. Hence, when he says that the grades of the objectification of the will are Ideas in Plato’s sense, we are not meant to ask whether in that case they exist in another world or whatever.<sup>24</sup>

We have to be careful to clarify what we mean by the ‘logical’ status of something, however. Do we construe the Idea and the object as two distinct things that relate ‘logically’? We have not advanced our interpretation by speaking of two distinct *things*. We should hold on to the claim that the difference between object and Idea is that between *two distinct cognitions* of the same thing; this preserves the identity relationship between the Idea and the target, which is the ‘object’ *seen differently*.

The status of the Idea is often understood as a universal ‘thing’ in juxtaposition to a particular ‘thing’ with which it relates in terms of subsumption.<sup>25</sup> The previous can mislead us by permitting a break with the identity relationship that grounds aesthetic contemplation. We should clarify that the relationship Schopenhauer posits between the Idea and the object is not *causal*, but one of *identity*. As Hamlyn points out, the relationship between the target and its Idea is not *synonymous* with that between a ‘particular’ and its ‘universal’ ‘type’ or ‘kind’. His reading implies an identity relationship without fully fleshing it out:

Grades of the objectification of the will are not just *kinds* either, if that term suggests something that is merely universal in character and simply instantiated in a number of particulars – a mere class. There remains a gulf between particulars and grades of objectification of the will, just because the will has nothing to do with plurality. The grade of the will’s objectivity which is the oak is *the* oak; not the class of oaks, but the prototype oak which no single oak tree in the world may quite match or live up to. It is an ideal entity, something that is both token and type.<sup>26</sup>

The universality suggestive of the Idea cannot be modeled on reason alone, but on the combination of reason and imagination. What is universal about the ‘will-

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24 Hamlyn, David: *Schopenhauer*. London 1980, 112.

25 This reading of the ‘Ideas’ is prolific in the literature, see, e. g., Gardiner, Patrick: *Schopenhauer*. Bristol 1963, 205–207 and 213–214; Vandenabeele, Bart: Schopenhauer on Sense Perception and Aesthetic Cognition. In: *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 45 (2011) 37–57; 51–53; Vandenabeele, Bart: Schopenhauer and the Objectivity of Art. In: *A Companion to Schopenhauer*. Ed. by Bart Vandenabeele, Oxford 2012, 219–233; Atwell, *Character of the World*, 148–150; Magee, Bryan: *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*. New York 1983, 165; Janaway, Christopher: *Self and World in Schopenhauer’s Philosophy*. New York 1989, 9–10; Wicks, *Schopenhauer*, 107; Young, *Schopenhauer*, 130.

26 Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, 106.

ing thing' (Idea) that is the dog is not synonymous to what is universal about the concept 'dog'. Our views on universality and individuality have shifted the moment we understand the relationship between the 'concept' dog and the 'object' dog under aesthetic contemplation. The latter sees an identity between the Idea and the target that is, supposedly, its representative.

We cannot fault readings that are tempted to make sense of the Idea by using what obtains only under the PSR. This is because Schopenhauer's own abstruse descriptions of the Ideas are sometimes misleading (cf. WR I, 216 and 219; WR II, 372). These passages do not tell us what makes an Idea meaningful under aesthetic contemplation, but tries to compare it to, and thereby misleadingly invites us to make it meaningful under, cognition through the PSR. Schopenhauer is adamant to prevent a 'conceptual' interpretation of the Idea, however, which is the only meaning we can acquire through the PSR. This is also what he found unsatisfactory in Plato's account of the Forms:

[...] it is not the individual thing, the object of our common apprehension, nor is it the concept, the object of rational thought and science. Although Idea and concept have something in common, namely the fact that as unities both stand for [*vertreten*] a multiplicity of actual things [...]. I certainly do not mean to say that Plato had a clear conception of this distinction: in fact, many of his examples and descriptions of Ideas are applicable only to concepts. (WR I, 259–260)

What he meant to demonstrate, and perhaps he should have done so more effectively than he did, is that what we see as concepts acquire a *different meaning* under aesthetic contemplation. The Ideas proceed from a different kind of cognition premised on his correlation theory; they are the counterparts of concepts, when and only when we aesthetically contemplate something:

[...] the distinction between concept and Idea can be expressed figuratively by saying: concepts are like dead receptacles; what we place inside actually lies next to each other, and we cannot take out more (through analytic judgments) than we have put in (through synthetic reflection): in those who have grasped them, on the other hand, Ideas develop representations that are novel with respect to concepts sharing the same name: the Idea is like a living and developing organism endowed with generative powers, an organism that can produce things that were not already packaged up inside it. (WR I, 261)

Schopenhauerian Ideas individuate a target of cognition in a different manner than their conceptual counterparts. The Idea is the result of another way of looking at something, not our 'looking at something else'. A useful passage that further nuances this difference is his distinction between concepts and melodies.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See for example, "[...] melodies are to a certain extent like universal concepts, being abstractions from reality [...] concepts contain simply the very first forms abstracted from intuition, the out-

Some commentators argue that we should read the Ideas as our perceiving the object's significance or meaning, which they contend is found in something other than its individuality. Aesthetic contemplation, this reading contends, is *not* concerned with the target's *individual significance*, but representing its "universal significance".<sup>28</sup> This reading is not wrong, but, once again, it is important to construe this 'universal significance' under aesthetic contemplation and not under the PSR. The Idea-target relation is not a concept-object or type-token relation, but an identity relation between the will and its expression through some target of our cognition. By speaking of the 'universal significance' of something we are tempted to comprehend the relation as 'an object subsumed under a *concept*' and so we stay wed to perceiving the world through the PSR. Following this reading, something has value through its relation to some other universal thing called an 'Idea'. The individual that is the target of our cognition is irrelevant. What counts is what – we can take our pick here – 'nature', 'god', 'the thing-in-itself', 'its species' etc., intends or causes the 'target' to be. Aesthetic contemplation in this sense shows us the 'intention' or the 'effect' of something other than the target of our cognition. Notice that this reading ascribes a causal relationship between the target and the Idea where Schopenhauer argued for an identity relationship; it is this ascription that leads us to ostensibly misleading, though not necessarily wrong, propositions. Aesthetic contemplation, in the reading I defend, shows us a difference in *our* cognition of *the same thing* premised on a change in us more than a change in the target.<sup>29</sup>

Others have argued that it is paradoxical to claim that when we contemplate aesthetically an artwork we are not perceiving the particular object that is its subject-matter, but "a mysterious entity that eludes ordinary perception"<sup>30</sup>. This suggests that when we move from ordinary cognition under the PSR to aesthetic contemplation we somehow lose the object *entirely*. This objection is correct when read loosely, but it also risks overshooting its mark. What is lost is not the 'individual target of our cognition', but cognition of it *as an object*. Schopenhauer perceives a gradual transition from the world filled with *objects* to the *Ideas*.<sup>31</sup> The concept is that which is 'constructed out of mere relations' (cf. WR II 363–364), whilst the Ideas reveal the 'essence' or the 'character' of that which appears as an

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er shells that have been stripped off things, as it were, and are thus wholly authentic *abstracta*; music on the other hand provides the innermost kernel, prior to all form – the heart of things." (WR I, 291).

28 See Wicks, *Schopenhauer*, 98; Vandenberg, *Perception and Cognition*, 53; Young, *Schopenhauer*, 130–131.

29 For more on this and how it differs from Kant's aesthetic 'ideas' see Vandenberg, *Objectivity of Art*, 225–226.

30 Gardiner, *Schopenhauer*, 207. See also, Soll, *Redemption of Life Through Art*, 97–98.

31 For more on this 'gradual transition' and its implications for Schopenhauer's philosophy of the will see Kofler, *Artist as Subject*, 201–203.

object and which we try to conceptualize. We remember that though not wrong, ‘essence’ or ‘character’ are senseless unless seen from a ‘different side’, which, I have argued, is what we recognize through our first-person experience of ‘willing something’. In sum, Schopenhauer makes aesthetic contemplation meaningful by projecting the will on the concepts of reason.

#### 4. *The Subjective Correlate: Disinterestedness and the Object’s Purpose*

In a similar fashion, I will juxtapose ordinary ‘subjectivity’ with ‘aesthetic’ subjectivity to give both subjective correlates.

We perceive something *as an object*, for Schopenhauer, when we are ‘looking for something to will’. The target of cognition seen *as an object* is correlated by our assuming a purposive and action-oriented stance on it as we do when we will something in it; *our aims* make the target *meaningful to us*. Objects will stand out from the background *as desirable* or *fit for purpose* (or not and so if they stand out at all), on the basis of our own will. The subjective correlate of the cognition of an object is therefore, *prima facie*, our *self-interest*. The *needier* we are (i. e., the more we search for something to will or for that which we will) the more objects and object-relations we perceive as *possible* motives for us. Self-interest grounds the perception of *objects* as fit to be utilized towards some end. The willing that is suspended or suppressed by aesthetic contemplation is, *prima facie*, egoism.<sup>32</sup>

When we perceive the world as filled with objects and object-relations, we take an interest in them, or some of them appear as meaningful and-or grab our attention, correlative to how they advance our purpose. They promise some pleasure, or to aid us in avoiding or getting rid of some pain. Aesthetic contemplation, he argues, happens entirely in the absence of such relations to our own will:

As soon as any relation between even that purely intuitive object and our own will, our own person, re-enters our consciousness, the magic is over: we fall back into cognition governed by the principle of sufficient reason, we no longer recognize the Idea but only the particular thing, the link in a chain to which we too belong. (WR I, 222)

The above suggests that self-interest opposes aesthetic contemplation. Although it is true, this description of it is incomplete. Self-interest is not the *only* interest that opposes aesthetic contemplation and must be overcome:

[...] we regard houses, ships, machines, and the like with the idea of their purpose and their suitability therefor; human beings with the idea of their relation to us, if

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32 Schopenhauer construes egoism as the obsession with our own body and its continued existence or enhancement; cf. Schopenhauer, Arthur: “Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals” (OBM), 113–257; 190–191.

they have any, and then of their relation to one another, whether in their present actions or according to their position and vocation, perhaps judging their fitness for it, and so on [...]. In this way the consideration will gain in accuracy and extent, but remains the same as regards its quality and nature [...]. In most cases and as a rule, everyone is abandoned to this method of consideration [...]. But if, by way of exception, it happens that we experience a momentary enhancement of the intensity of our intuitive intelligence, we at once see things with entirely different eyes, for we now apprehend them no longer according to their relations, but according to what they are in and by themselves. (WR II, 372)

This passage suggests that what is suspended is purposive cognition *itself* and so his conception of ‘interest’ is broader than *self-interest* and includes the latter only by *logical extension*. Schopenhauer cannot claim that self-interest alone is what is suspended; because he later argues that aesthetic contemplation is linked to *both* morality (whose sphere is ‘overcoming of egoism’) and ascetic resignation (whose sphere is ‘overcoming of *all* incentives [*Triebfedern*]’). Can the willing that is suspended then be willing in the extended sense, that is, all purposive cognition irrespective of what it may be? Notice that this proposition cannot be aesthetic contemplation since it describes ascetic resignation. We know that the former can lead to the latter, albeit *not necessarily*.<sup>33</sup> In aesthetic contemplation the change in us can “be regarded as an act of self-denial” (WR II, 367), but self-denial is different from the denial of the will to life, i. e., ascetic resignation. Thus, the ‘will’ changes its sense from a narrower to a broader sense. The subjective correlate of aesthetic contemplation is a broader sense of willing, and so what is projected (and overcome) is broader, though, it is not so broad that it means negation of all willing.<sup>34</sup> The subjective correlate of aesthetic contemplation is therefore broader than that of cognition under the PSR, but not *as broad as* that of ascetic resignation.

We require a legitimate distinction between aesthetic contemplation and ascetic resignation that allows Schopenhauer sufficient room to *link* the two, but not to confound them. The key difference is that in aesthetic contemplation, though the purposive stance correlative to the object is *momentarily suspended*,

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33 Cf. “The will affirms itself, which means that while in its objectivity (i. e. in the world and life) its own essence is given to it completely and distinctly as representation, this cognition is no impediment to its willing; rather, consciously, deliberately, and with cognition, it wills the life that it thus recognizes as such, just as it did as a blind urge before it had this cognition. – The opposite of this, the negation of the will to life, is manifest when willing comes to an end with that cognition. The particular, known appearances no longer act as motives for willing, but instead, cognition of the essence of the world (which mirrors the will) – cognition that has arisen by grasping the Ideas – becomes a tranquillizer of the will and the will freely abolishes itself.” (WR I, 311)

34 Ascetic resignation comes as *one reaction* (i. e. a negation) stemming from this broader sense of willing with its own target, i. e., *life itself*, as it appears through bodily vicissitudes.

the cognition of some *purpose* or *willing in the extended sense*, i. e., as the bearer of a *meaningful* perception of the world, is not. It is projected on the target so that its own independent will becomes the aim of our focus. In aesthetic contemplation, we perceive the individual target as *willing* in its own right. Ascetic resignation, suspends all willing including the individual target's own. It is cognition of life or living itself, not of some *individual*. The latter is *relational* in that it is premised on, at least, the relation between us and the individual target of cognition, whereas the former is premised on a relation between us and *life* or *living itself*. This difference is subtle, but can help us untie an unyielding conceptual knot.

When we become self-conscious during ordinary cognition that yields objects and motives we do so as willing, i. e., we prepare ourselves to act upon something. There is a by-fit relationship between readiness to act and the perception of *an object*; it typifies the perception of something as fit for some use that is independent from the target of our cognition. The 'purposive stance' and the 'object' are inseparable correlates that are constitutive of a view of things that is a framework for our reasoning or reflecting on something. The subjective correlate of the Idea is different to this.

Aesthetic contemplation does not cognize the object *as an object* fit for the purpose of something *other than* itself, i. e., something external to it, which always leads to a purpose for a willing subject independent from the target. We do not cognize the house relative to its purpose for the owner, which may be to sell or rent it; or the builder which may be to construct it for someone else; or the resident which may be to reside in it, and so on with any will or interest independent from the house's. But what does it mean to cognize the house's own will or interest? It is not our perceiving it as some pile of stone organized for our needs, but as the result of a *struggle* between "gravity, cohesion, rigidity, hardness, these universal qualities of stone" (WR I, 239), which he sees as Ideas.<sup>35</sup> We perceive the perfect building that arises from the relations between these strivings. We perceive it as striving and want to see how it strives to appear *to us* as it *struggles* against its limitations. We want to perceive the 'perfect organization of stone' that is possible *for us* and the limits of our intellect, but *not* for our own interest. This is different from aiming to perceive the *perfect* building *for living in* or *for selling* etc. Our (aesthetic) interest *revises* our perception of both 'perfection' and a 'perfect building' by "leaving aside its utilitarian function" (WR I, 239).

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35 Though, Schopenhauer focuses mostly on "the struggle between gravity and rigidity" and claims that this is "the only aesthetic content of fine architecture" (WR I, 239). He also makes a more general claim about the aesthetic appreciation or content of artefacts, i. e., that they "serve to express Ideas: only it is not the Idea of the artefact that speaks from them, but rather the Idea of the material that has been given this artificial form" (WR I, 236).

Aesthetic contemplation suspends *everyone's* self-interest in the target except for, and, in fact, so that the target's will can take the center-stage and thus saturate our world-view. We want to perceive *its* interest, and where interest is not applicable to it because it is not a 'human being', nor 'egoism' because it is not an 'animal', we nevertheless aim to see its striving, struggling, overpowering and so on. We suspend the stance that seeks to utilize it, which is not *just* egoistic. There is thus a *conditional*, not *bi-conditional* relationship between the purposive stance and egoism. To suspend the purposive stance *necessarily* entails our suspending egoism; to suspend egoism does *not necessarily* entail suspending the purposive stance. The extended sense of willing that Schopenhauer, perhaps misleadingly, calls 'will-less' or 'disinterested', is still a kind of willing and interest we take in something. The sense of willing is broader than the narrower one of 'egoistic willing' and so is our interest. To flesh it out we should ask: what *kind* of interest would we have in aiming to see what a target of our cognition is striving to become but fails to fully be it, such that our cognition does not yield *an object*, but *an Idea*? Projection of willing underpins this and so what makes it meaningful is our aiming to see *its* willing.

Our ordinary interest in the object is, for Schopenhauer, always experienced correlative to some will that is independent from the target. We can be interested in the target of our cognition only correlative to a purpose it serves either *for us* or *another individual* independent from it, which commits us to perceiving it *as an object* or a motive (its more effective or stronger counterpart). In any perception and interest other than the previous ones we do not cognize or take an interest in *an object at all*, but a *willing thing*. The subjective correlate of our aesthetic contemplation is, thus, our wanting to perceive the target's *own will*. Daniel Came is right to claim that "to be disinterested does not mean to fail to be interested"<sup>36</sup> and that for Schopenhauer,

[m]y attitude towards an object is disinterested, if and only if, in attending to it, I focus only on the object and not any relations that obtain between the object and anything apart from the object itself. Disinterestedness is therefore an attitude of reflective disengagement from all considerations of utility, which considers only what the object is 'in itself'.<sup>37</sup>

He is also right to contend that Schopenhauer's conception of disinterestedness is "reflective disengagement from all considerations of utility"<sup>38</sup>, although we should be cautious about what we mean by 'reflective'. Our suspending considerations of utility does not *only* refer to the target's "relation to our will"<sup>39</sup> or

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36 Came, Daniel: Disinterestedness and Objectivity. In: *European Journal of Philosophy* 17 (2009), 91–100; 95.

37 Ibid., 95.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., 96.



how *we* seek to utilize it, but to *any* will (in the extended sense) that is independent from it; only by extension does this include our own will. We suspend a consideration into how *anyone* or *anything* would utilize it. Nevertheless, we should go further than the above passage is able to take us because, for Schopenhauer, the object ‘in itself’ is meaningless *for us* when put in these terms. The object ‘in itself’ seemingly interests us according to Came, but how do we make sense of the fact that ‘something’ ostensibly “useless and unprofitable” (WR II, 388) interests us? It does so, I have argued, because it is not perceived *as an object* at all, but as the objective outcome of willing, striving, overpowering and so on. This suggests a different conception of ‘utility’ that then makes our interest meaningful in a different way. The previous is not encapsulated by the ‘disengagement from *all* considerations of utility’, which would leave us with nothing.

Disinterestedness, for Schopenhauer, is suspending the kind of cognition that permits its target to be perceived *as an object*. This requires more than the suspension of our individual will, which is unfortunately overlooked by some commentators. For example, Denham argues that in aesthetic contemplation we are

[...] liberated only from a specific species of will, leaving behind or transcending a certain ordinary species of activity, viz. the fulfilment of individual and egocentric aims and desires.<sup>40</sup>

She qualifies her claim by adding that Schopenhauer intends ‘silencing of the will’ in

[...] a very specific and limited sense of that phrase: it is not all modes of willing but only, as it were, egocentric willing that is dissipated in aesthetic experience.<sup>41</sup>

Remember, however, that the ‘will’ Schopenhauer construed as suspended in aesthetic contemplation intends to capture all *purposive* cognition that aims to utilize the target towards an end independent from its own, which yields the cognition of *an object* or of something fit for purpose or use. An artwork can be seen *as an object*, but not during the aesthetic contemplation or appreciation of an artwork.<sup>42</sup> Aesthetic contemplation is meaningful if we no longer perceive *an object*, but how the target of our cognition *wills* to appear *to us*.

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40 Denham, Alison E.: Attuned, Transcendent & Transfigured: Nietzsche’s Aesthetic Psychology. In: *Nietzsche on Art & Life*, ed. by Daniel Came, New York 2013, 163–200, 176.

41 Denham, Nietzsche’s Aesthetic Psychology, 179.

42 In fact, for Schopenhauer, an artwork on its own is just a target of cognition that can be utilized like any other and so seen as an object: “[...] the goal of all the other arts is to arouse cognition of these Ideas through the presentation of particular things (artworks themselves are always such things) – something that is possible only given a corresponding alteration in the subject of cognition” (WR I, 284). To perceive the artwork as aiming to facilitate cognition of an Idea as opposed to aiming to be consumed by us requires a *necessary* and *correlative* change *in us*.

### 5. Concluding Remarks

Cognizing the target's own *individual* will is the cornerstone of Schopenhauer's 'aesthetic contemplation'. To acquire better insight into what it means, I have argued that we should take him by his word. I have suggested an approach to the Ideas that presupposes that aesthetic contemplation is a cognition of *something* and so is premised on his correlation theory of cognition. It is not the cognition of *an object*, but of an *Idea*. The *Idea* is not and cannot possibly be separate from the target of our cognition or its subjective correlate, i.e., suspension of the purposive and introduction of a new, so-called 'disinterested' stance. We should thus dispense with the conception of the Schopenhauerian Ideas as 'things'. To make the Ideas meaningful we have to project willing (i. e. the will-body identity inherent to willing something) on the world and the targets of our cognition. This projection *aims* to perceive the target's *individual will*; so we are 'disinterested' in the sense of being *interested* in perceiving the target's 'will' rather than in acting upon it for some will independent from it. Ideas are thus adequate objectifications of the target's willing, striving, overpowering and so on, understood as projections of the contemplator's own will premised on the will-body identity.