

Philosophy Group – March 2025 – Ruth Sansom

Schopenhauer 1788 to 1860 regarded himself as a genius and perhaps he was. His mother disagreed. She thought she was a genius and contended that there was only room for one genius in the family and that was her.

Schopenhauer's great work was **The World as Will and Representation**. The term **The Will** does not mean will in the way we mere mortals understand it. It stands for reality as opposed to appearance. The Will is the life force and is blind and purposeless. It is indifferent to human suffering and morality. Representation (or appearance) is the way in which we as individuals see the world through our senses. The Will generates wants in us which even if satisfied lead to further wants. We are caught in a circle.

One way out is through an aesthetic or monastic life, which enables a person to turn away from the brute force of will, desire and the body and cut ourselves off from society. Thankfully, there is another escape route from the driving force of **The Will** and that is through **the experience of nature or art**. The normal human state of mind is constantly analysing, reasoning, or evaluating, but it is possible to give our individual mind to the present moment.

When looking at a landscape, for instance, some can lose themselves in the object, such that they forget their individuality which can lead to compassionate sympathy for all living things. This feeling for others is a means for us to remain beyond the grasp of **The Will** and our ego at least for a short period of time.

The conventional view of Schopenhauer is that he was the “**supreme pessimist**.” And yet, **perhaps**, Schopenhauer's conclusion is not actually dark at all, but rather uplifting: it is only our dependence on the world of phenomena (appearance) as the source of truth that always proves to be such a painful dead end.

Though we are beings who exist in time and space, paradoxically it is only in moving beyond these constructs that we are liberated.

Of course the ability to transcend every day points of view in regard to objects of nature aesthetically is not available to most human beings. Rather the ability to regard nature aesthetically is a hallmark of a genius (and he should know).

Wallace Anderson

Do come and join us at our next Philosophy meeting on the fourth Tuesday of the month at Enterprise House from 10am – 12noon. 22nd April – Truth. 27th May. 24th June.