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Charles University

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

(BA Module + Erasmus students)

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**Philosophies and Phenomenologies of the Body**

**A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (1818, 1844, 1859)**

• **S’ ambition**: To reconnect to both Plato’s and Kant’s philosophical aspiration

🡪 Which consists (1) in the fundamental claim that there exist two dimensions of the world, one of phenomenal nature, and another of noumenal character

= In S’ jargon, Kant’s distinction between phenomenon and noumenon (appearance and things in itself) or the Platonic differentiation between the sensible and ever changing domain and the realm of ideas or forms turns into the distinction between *the world as representation* and *the world as will*

🡪 Accordingly, Schopenhauer’s (2) second thesis is that the so-called noumenal or essential dimension of the world needs to be identified what he calls *will*

“Kant’s philosophy is therefore the only one with which a thorough acquaintance is positively assumed in what is to be here discussed. But if in addition to this the reader has dwelt for a while in the school of the divine Plato, he will be the better prepared to hear me, and the more susceptible to what I say” (*Preface to the First Edition*)

• **Structure of the work and internal division**

**Book I: The World as Representation. First Aspect** (*The Representation Submitted to the Principle of Sufficient Reason*)

**Book II: The World as Will. First Aspect** (*The Objectification of the Will*)

**Book III: The World as Representation. Second Aspect** (*The Representation Independent of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. The Platonic Idea: The Object of Art*)

**Book IV: The World as Will. Second Aspect** (*With the Attainment of Self-Knowledge, Affirmation*

*and Denial of the Will-to-Live*)

• **The World as a Representation**

🡪 The world understood as a correlate of the subject, that is to say, as the object standing in front of the subject

“‘The world is my representation’: this is a truth valid with reference to every living and knowing being, although man alone can bring it into reflective, abstract consciousness. (…) It then becomes clear and certain to him that he does not know a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world around him is there only as representation, in other words, only in reference to another thing, namely that which represents, and this is himself. If any truth can be expressed a priori, it is this; for it is the statement of that form of all possible and conceivable experience, a form that is more general than all others, than time, space, and causality, for all these presuppose it. While each of these forms (…) is valid only for a particular class of representations, the division into object and subject, on the other hand, is the common form of all those classes (…). Therefore no truth is more certain, more independent of all others, and less in need of proof than this, namely that everything that exists for knowledge, and hence the whole of this world, is only object in relation to the subject, perception of the perceiver, in a word, representation” (§1)

🡪 The *world as a representation* is to be understood according to *three major forms*: *space*, *time*, *causality*. In other words: in the dimension of the world as representation every relation is either spatial, temporal or causal.

*Representations themselves stand in relation to one another in either one of these three forms*

“every possible object is subordinate to it, that is to say, stands in a necessary relation to other objects, on the one hand as determined, on the other as determining. (…) the entire existence of all objects, in so far as they are objects, representations, and nothing else, is traced back completely to this necessary relation of theirs to one another, consists only in that relation, and hence is entirely relative; but more of this later. I have further shown that this necessary relation, expressed in general by the principle of sufficient reason, appears in other forms corresponding to the classes into which objects are divided according to their possibility; and again that the correct division of those classes is verified by these forms” (§2)

• **The “body” in Book I (§6)**

🡪 On the one hand, the *body* is considered only as a *representation* among others and hence standing in spatial, temporal and causal relations to them

“Meanwhile for the present, in this first book we are taking everything merely as representation, as object for the subject. Our own body, which is the starting-point for each of us in the perception of the world, we consider, like all other real objects, merely from the side of knowableness, and accordingly it is for us only a representation”

🡪 On the other hand, within such network of representations, the *body* is the starting-point for us in order to know the world, namely, some other representations:

“Therefore, the body is for us immediate object, in other words, that representation which forms the starting-point of the subject’s knowledge, since it itself with its immediately known changes precedes the application of the law of causality, and thus furnishes this with the first data”

*The sensations, here understood as modifications of the body, furnishes us the data, namely, those representations to which the law of causality is applied*

Sensibility

The body does not really exist yet as an “object” for us; we do not know primarily it but only *the other bodies that effect and act upon it*… The body as a representation is primarily known through its sensations, i.e., through the modifications and changes produced by other representations

🡪 An object as such exists only for the intellect/understanding, and only after the application of the category of causality:

“For all knowledge of an object proper, in other words, of a representation of perception in space, exists only through and for the understanding, and thus not before, but only after, the application of the understanding. Therefore the body as object proper, in other words, as representation of perception in space, is first known indirectly, like all other objects, through the application of the law of causality to the action of one of its parts on another, as by the eye seeing the body, or the hand touching it” (§6)