

Literature review: The extend of the will: sexuality and asexuality in Schopenhauer's philosophy.

In section 60 of *the world as will and representation*, book 2, Schopenhauer aims to bring a clearness to the affirmation and denial of the will. §60 also focusses on, the sexual impulse as the clearest expression of the will to live. This will be the main focus of this literature review. This passage in Schopenhauer was chosen because the way he talks about sexuality frames it as something bigger than desire, he talks about it being a fundamental part of the force of life itself.

Schopenhauer believes the will to be something greater than an individual it is not bound to anything; it's the ultimate source of all. When people are aware of the will, the will either affirms itself by willing, living and desiring, or it denies itself by avoiding indulgence and turning itself away from willing. The body its actions, its instincts and its desires are the expression of the will, the body is how the will presents itself in people, hence why Schopenhauer says that "Therefore instead of affirmation of the will, we can also say affirmation of the body."¹

Schopenhauer states in his text that the satisfaction of the sexual impulse is bigger than the affirmation of the existence of an individual. As it affirms life for a period of time after the passing of an individual. With this he is saying that the saying that the sexual impulse is not about an individual's personal desire and/or satisfaction, it is about procreation, about securing our species.

"Because the inner being of nature, the will-to-live, expresses itself most strongly in the sexual impulse"², Schopenhauer says that nature is only concerned with the preservation of species, not the individual. But to what extent would this apply to individuals who experience asexuality. Schopenhauer puts a big emphasis on how the will-to-live most strongly expresses itself through the sexual impulse. But in the asexual experience there is no sexual impulse no sexual desire, even when there is a will to reproduce, in Schopenhauer's view this would mean there should be a sexual impulse. Though Schopenhauer does state that through knowledge and intellect the impulses from the will can be resisted, this would require knowledge of the will and asexuality doesn't present itself in a person as a choice, as a conscious decision to defy the will, it is a natural occurrence in an individual.

So, if according to Schopenhauer sexuality is the strongest expression of the will-to-live, would asexuality than be people denying the will. And is this denial from a point of knowledge and intellect or from nature, from a greater force that is beyond our power that drives us further. It could also be suggested that sexuality and asexuality are both expressions of the will, but in different forms and intensities.

Schopenhauer's broader idea is that freedom and peace come from denying the will. If sexual desire/impulse exposes what is the wills strongest and most expressed hold on people's lives, the existence of asexuality makes it possible that the force of the will can at least in part be denied by someone's nature. Together sexuality and asexuality show that the dominance of the will on people is not an absolute power, and that exceptions exist, and that there is a potential for freedom from the will.

¹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Book IV, §60, 327.

² Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Book IV, §60, 330.

Bibliography

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*. Translated by E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover Publications, 1969.