

ABSTRACT

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Dissertation Title: WILL-LESS EXPERIENCE THROUGH MUSIC: A STUDY OF THE
AESTHETICS OF ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

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This research paper examines Schopenhauer's concepts of aesthetic contemplation and music, with the purpose of evaluating whether listening to music can actually bring relief to the will-driven sufferings of a listener.

The will has been Arthur Schopenhauer's concept for the true inner nature, or the thing-in-itself of the world. The will that is within a person causes suffering to the person. A person is driven by the will for some kind of fulfillment, and once he or she attains that fulfillment, the person very quickly moves to a new desire, otherwise boredom will set in. If the person fails to attain the fulfillment, he or she will feel dismay. Given this, a person's driving will does not allow him or her lasting fulfillment, nor does it allow the person to attain a state of tranquility and happiness.

Another kind of will-driven suffering within a person is brought about by the 'blind' will. The will acts blindly within a person, driving a person without any reason or cause. Also, the person has no conscious control over such blind drives of the will.

But Schopenhauer proposes that aesthetic contemplation of artworks can provide relief from our will-driven sufferings, though temporarily.

Music, however, is a kind of artwork that Schopenhauer considers to be standing apart from the other kinds of artworks. Music, according to Schopenhauer, is a direct

manifestation of the will. Music is “...as immediate an objectification and copy of the whole will...” (Schopenhauer, 1969, p.257). Therefore, through music, the will is talking directly to the listener, and the listener experiences the will.

However, if we carefully consider Schopenhauer’s concept of aesthetic contemplation, it seems that Schopenhauer has fallen short of explaining specifically how experiencing music as a direct manifestation (*Abbild*) of the will itself, can provide relief from the same will-driven suffering. In other words, at least in my view, he fails to convincingly account for how a listener of music is able to achieve a “...will-less...” status (of sorts) (Schopenhauer, 1969, p.179).

