World As Will And Geist

Arthur Schopenhauer and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel were both very prominent German philosophers around the 19th century. Between Schopenhauer and Hegel, Hegel should be seen as the more popular and agreeable of the two. Hegel's philosophies have even remained relevant and popular in our current generation. However, there is a misunderstanding in modern philosophy when it comes to distinguishing these two philosophers, that suggests the idea “Schopenhauer, the pessimist; Hegel the optimist”. Labeling Hegel as the optimist of the two is an idea that originates solely from Schopenhauer, having chosen to pick a fight with Hegel, later criticizing him for being a “charlatan”. Hegel’s popularity emerged from his ideals about the Post-Kantian critique and the methods in which he used to persuade his audience and justify his claims. While Hegel and Schopenhauer clearly disagree on some matters, their messages are not completely different from each other. In fact, both Schopenhauer and Hegel have a similar starting point to their approach. The way they end up explaining[explaining what?] it in the end is what the two philosophers complete opposites of one another. Both Schopenhauer and Hegel start their philosophies from a Kantian perspective with the intention of grappling with Immanuel Kant’s philosophy of freedom, ~~but then they choose to follow two different paths.~~ The two philosophers both criticize Kant’s philosophy, but they question freedom in the context of their own philosophical views

Freedom is generally defined as one’s right to act, speak, or think the way they wish. More specifically, Google defines freedom as “the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint.'' Among the philosophers, such a definition is generally adopted as well. Philosophers have generally agreed on the idea that humans are most likely to be willing to live in a condition in which they are “free”. Kant takes the term freedom one step further by considering and defining it in a more sophisticated manner. The idea of freedom, as Kant may call it, suggests that humans are free creatures because they can choose what they want and that this freedom comes from our own desires. Kant does not agree with this idea of freedom. On the contrary, he suggests that acting based on these desires in fact makes human beings governed by their animalistic instincts. This would not make humans free, but enslaved by their own desires. Kant’s perception of freedom is not based on desires; it is based on reason. Reasoning or basing something on reason is essentially deriving conclusions with an objective perspective rather than a subjective one. In other words, using facts and evidence instead of experiences when deriving conclusions is being reasonable. Kant later discusses reason in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. He defines pure reason as reason which humans base their actions on without being dependent on any other incentive. He suggests that humans choose to act a certain way simply because it is good. According to Kant’s idea of pure reason, it can be concluded that humans have freedom when they act based not on their desires but their definition of what they think is good for a certain activity they are taking a part of in order to be content as a result of their actions.<-[too long and confusing of a sentence] In this particular part of Kant’s critique of pure reason, we must examine the distinction between desire, and what is good and evil. Kant carefully separates the definition of one’s desire from the moral laws on which human beings base their lives. There exist an individual’s opinions on what is morally good in a society and humans live their lives in a world governed by these moral laws. Living according to these morals is different than following individual desires when living our lives. Kant’s suggestion regarding freedom comes down to this idea: We must put our own desires aside to achieve true freedom.

With the ideas he adopted in *The Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant became one of the most influential philosophers of the 18th century. In fact, many modern philosophers of the 19th century chose to follow, criticize or simply examine Kant’s ideas about freedom and reason. One of these philosophers was Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer was a prominent philosopher in the early 1800s best known for his book *The World As Will and Representation.* Schopenhauer, although he can be considered a Kantian, did not always agree with Kant’s arguments. To go beyond Kantianism, he asserted the idea of time into Kant’s pure reason. Schopenhauer’s idea suggests that time is a constructor of pure reason. He defined past as what comes before present; future as what comes after present; and present as the point that separates past and future. The perception of time therefore differs for Kant and Schopenhauer. According to Schopenhauer, time is made up from the subject’s actions through sufficient reason. Due to his interpretation of time, understanding Schopenhauer’s perception of time requires an understanding of the principle of sufficient reason for Schopenhauer. The principle of sufficient reason says that everything human beings can imagine is true and that there must be a reason for everything to be a certain way and not another way. Schopenhauer refers to the principle of sufficient reason by connecting it to the principle of individuation. He links individuation with the concepts of time and space as well as the rationality and necessity aspects of it that makes things the way they are. Schopenhauer’s principle of sufficient reason and principle of individuation are essentially familiar topics as to reflecting Kant’s philosophy that discusses concepts such as space, time, existence, understanding, freedom and so on.

In his book, *The World As Will And Representation*, Schopenhauer argues that the world exists as representation and will. The representation and will are two different perspectives of the world; they do not define the world as two different ideas. According to Schopenhauer, the will and the representation are two different sides of a coin, meaning the world has a double-aspect. One misinterpretation of Schopenhauer’s argument is that the Will causes representations in the world, which is not the case in Schopenhauer’s philosophical thinking. The Will and representations are in fact one together, neither one of them causing the other, but both working in correlation with each other. By Schopenhauer, the world as the Will is interpreted as the world in itself whereas the world as representations is interpreted as the way the objects and things appear in the world. In Schopenhauer’s argument, the Will comes down to being the unity in the world; and the representations, the diversity. Concepts such as unity, diversity and individualization brings our minds one of the biggest philosophical questions regarding the problem of the one and the many. The problem of the one and the many comes from the understanding of the universe as one thing. This has been a problem discussed by philosophers for many years and has become the key stone of the philosophical discussion. A large number of philosophers have tried to find that one fundamental thing that lies behind all things that exist in the universe. Schopenhauer believes that there is only one thing and that all things go back to that one thing: the Will. Everything else is a representation.

He characterizes the world as the product of a power which he calls the *will*. The Will, in his description of the world, is neither God’s will nor human’s will. In fact, Schopenhauer thinks that the Will is the ultimate thing in itself that powers the universe. It is a force; it is everything; it is the One. However, Schopenhauer suggests that the world as will is pointless; has no end, no goal or no beginning; moves on without a destination. According to the philosopher, the world is constantly and endlessly moving forward but does not strive for a better state. The Will does not govern a moral quality unlike the freedom idea Kant puts forward that is explained through pure reason. Kant’s explanation of freedom suggested that humans have freedom through reasoning that has the premises of moral laws. Kant’s freedom comes from humans deciding on their actions based on what is good and what is bad. In Schopenhauer’s case, morality does not matter at all. On the contrary, Schopenhauer discusses that things are just the way they are; they are not good or bad, they do not carry the qualities that are defined by moral laws. According to Schopenhauer’s understanding and interpretation of the world, human beings fragment the world through reasoning, in a similar way to Kant’s argument about pure reason. While both of their arguments start off with the idea of basing things (existence or action) upon reasoning, the basis of the two philosopher’s definitions of reason differ. Schopenhauer argues that there are no objects that act independently, every object conform to the Will as well as everything else in the universe that humans experience and/or know of. Moreover, based on his argument that suggests the Will is neither good nor bad, Schopenhauer suggests that there is no such thing as horrifying. There can take place events which we would consider to be morally unacceptable in today’s society that Schopenhauer would consider to be neither good nor bad. This is where Schopenhauer’s so called pessimism comes into play. He has no hope in humanity, or the world. Therefore, Schopenhauer’s philosophical message in his arguments have been criticized negatively since the 19th century. The controversial philosopher was in fact going against another philosopher whose ideas were prominent in Germany. This philosopher was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel was a more prominent philosopher than Schopenhauer at their time; to this day, the controversy between the two philosophers still exists.

Hegel belongs to the period of German idealism in the philosophical history that came after Kant. He was known to be the most systematic one among the post-Kantian idealists. Although the German philosopher starts off his argument as a follower of Kant, he comes to surpassing the ideas of Kant while still taking his philosophical arguments into consideration in his works. Hegel wants to make the idea of freedom the very basis of nature, moreover, suggests that reason is the ultimate origin of all things which is a similar concept to Kant’s argument about pure reason. This argument of Hegel is in fact very Christian as well as it is Kantian. In modern philosophy, one question that Hegel asks in order to build upon Post-Kantianism is, “What happens when humans as subjects start thinking themselves”, in other words, if the subject starts treating itself as an object. There can be a distinguishment established between Kant and Hegel’s comprehension of the subject-object dichotomy despite their similarities. Regarding this dichotomy, Kant suggests a relationship between subject and object as the thinker and the thinkable. According to Kant, the subject is the thinker and the thing it thinks is the object. On the other hand, Hegel tries to define objects by dividing them to their opposites. This perspective is called *dialectic* in modern philosophy. The term was in fact first used by the Greek philosopher, Plato. Plato used the method of establishing truth by a conversation between people who hold opposite views and called such method *dialectic*. In Hegel’s scenario, this term is used slightly differently; it is defined in a more broad perspective. When Hegel says dialectic, he means that every finite thing in the universe is also its opposite. Dialectic essentially suggest that in order to define something (an idea of a thing); the proposition of the thing, the opposed proposition of the thing, and the mutual contradiction between the two opposing propositions must be established: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

Hegel argues that objects come into being as subjects alienated with a new concept that he brings up as something he calls the *geist*. While Kant’s world is based on nature that is predetermined, Hegel connects everything in the world back to this concept. It has been established that humans exist in the form of both objects and subjects. As objects, we are controlled by natural laws; as subjects, we consist within the *Geist*. Hegel defines *geist* as the fundamental origin of the universe. *Geist* can be translated as spirit or intellect which is not an actual object but a Godlike thing. It is sometimes translated as the “world spirit”. It can be concluded that the spirituality and the intellect of a human being is what makes them a subject regardless of their material values. The best way to comprehend Hegel’s geist is to think of it as a pre-existing condition for individual perception, self-understanding. It refers to the consciousness of a person in itself as well as the world in which humans live in. According to Hegel, *geist* is always working towards a goal and even if there are sometimes setbacks in the world, what matters is the overall process. Unlike Schopenhauer, Hegel believes that things are constantly getting better and the world is striving for goodness. Hegel has hope in human beings and encourages them to always strive for better despite the challenges and hardships that they might have to come across at times. It is clear that his suggestions regarding the philosophical insight on the world that we live in gave hope to people at his time. His ideas, therefore, were interpreted as generally optimistic and essentially made him become a popular philosopher in the 19th century Germany.

While Schopenhauer’s will is aimless, pointless, and meaningless, geist is rational. The will makes the world the way it is, but with geist, the world is striving for better. Geist is always working towards a goal which can be brought down to self realization/self actualization. Hegel says that by the time a man has reached mature age, he has come to full realization of himself. He suggests a similar understanding of the world that is derived from the concept of self realization. According to Hegel, as the world keeps growing, it is constantly developing and will eventually be at a state of fulfillment with goodness. From this comparison, it seems like Hegel wanted to focus on the positive aspects of all kinds of conflicts and drama. Since his main point was that everything that is going on in the world can be conceived within the march of progress, he does not give the people much about how to overcome challenges that human beings go through on a daily basis. On the other hand, Schopenhauer’s Will explains the world in a more realistic way. The Will simply governs the world that human beings live in without the features of being good or bad. With his theory of the will, Schopenhauer suggests that the reason people go through sufferings, challenges and hardships on a daily basis can be explained by a power that is greater than everything else but is neither good nor bad. Instead of overlooking the negative aspects that come with life like Hegel did by his theory of the Geist, Schopenhauer suggests way to overcome such hardships that human beings have to overcome. Some might say that Schopenhauer was a pessimist and Hegel was an optimist, however, it is more reasonable to say that while Hegel was neglecting the

Conclusion