Research on Humanities and Social Sciences
ISSN 2224-5766 (Paper) ISSN 2225-0484 (Online)
Vol.12, No.16, 2022

Schopenhauer and Luhmann: Some Unlikely Similarities?

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Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to compare similarities between Schopenhauer's conception of the world as *Representation* and Niklas Luhmann's notion of society as *Communication*. We explore the similarities between the way in which Schopenhauer constructs his speculations on the comprehension of reality, and how Luhmann describes what he considers contemporary society's intelligibility. The analyses presented here do not deal with the discussion of the nature of the *Will* and its manifestations in the process of construction of reality, which constitutes a relevant part of Schopenhauer's thought. At the end of our exposition we infer some points of convergence in these authors' explanatory models, although it is not possible to deduce, in a direct and categorical way, a theoretical affiliation between them.
Keywords: Schopenhauer. Representation. Luhmann. Communication. Systems.
DOI: 10.7176/RHSS/12-16-06
Publication date: August 31st 2022

Background

Often contemporary social thought is based on the works of the so-called Frankfurt School that emerged in Germany in the period before the beginning of the Second World War with the aim of developing a critical reflection on the processes of consolidation of bourgeois-capitalist society, seeking to unravel the meaning of the theory, in the face of such consolidation. Its authentic genesis dates from 1931-1932, with the publication of a journal dedicated to social research, whose "hard core" was formed by Max Horkheimer (director), Teodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Eric Fromm, Leo Lowenthal and Herbert Marcuse. The theoretical pillars on which the discussions of this journal were always linked focused on the search for convergence between the three critical traditions represented by Hegel, Marx and Freud.(Freitag, 1986; Taylor, 2007; Marcondes Filho, 2021) Although Schopenhauer lived at the same time as Hegel, in the same city, worked at the same university and taught classes in the same period, and discussed in his writings some topics that were discussed by Hegel, the theorists of the Frankfurt School ignored him completely. Even the second generation of this School, whose main representative was Habermas, who had personal and direct debates with Luhmann, both also ignored him, although, as we will demonstrate below, Luhmann's theoretical constructions have evident points of contact with the thought of this philosopher. It is the attempt to replace Schopenhauer's thought as one of the important foundations of contemporary social thought that mobilizes us in this work, and we will do so by indicating how traces of his ideas can be found in one of the most complex contemporary social theories, such as Niklas Luhmann's Theory.

1.Introduction

Schopenhauer was an early nineteenth century philosopher. He was born in Dantzig (Danzig, now Gdansk, Poland) in 1788 and spent his youth in Hamburg, Germany. His family was financially well-standing, and during his early life he visited various European countries, particularly France and England, as part of his preparation for taking over his father's business. In 1809, he entered the University of Göttingen and in 1811, he transferred to the University of Berlin to study philosophy. Between 1814 and 1818, Schopenhauer lived in Dresden, where he wrote his masterpiece *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Representation*)[1]. In 1818, he was invited to teach free courses at the University of Berlin and stayed there until 1831 when he returned to Frankfurt, where he remained until his death in 1860 (Safranski, 2018).

Schopenhauer's work long revealed the restlessness of a man who, along with family anxieties, held a deep discontent for the philosophy of his time. He believed the field had become largely irrelevant and committed himself to transforming "mediocre" systems of thought into objects of public admiration and respect, despite what he considered the stagnation of philosophical thought and development at the time.

Schopenhauer believed that most respected thinkers of his time were frauds and sophists, and he was not

[1] The book title is sometimes translated as *The World as Will and Idea*. In this article we consider the terms "idea" and "representation" as equivalent expressions, in line with the German-English translators who, in the preface of the English version, explain their preference in translating the word "*vorstellung*" to "idea" instead of "representation"; they consider the latter imprecise, less elegant and intelligible. The mentioned preface is found in *The World as Will and Idea* by Arthur Schopenhauer Translated from the German by R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp.

shy in attacking them publicly. He suggested a rigid discipline to those who wished to reach "the depth" of his arguments, which, together with his acid-tone criticism lead to his ostracism for the better part of his life. In his non-conformist mind, the reality of the world could only be understood if considered as a whole, composed of two inseparable parts: will and representation. In this paper we examine the parts of his theory that discuss world as representation and seek to identify how this conception also unfolds in Niklas Lumann's thought.

Luhmann was born in 1927 in Luneburg (Germany) and studied law at the University of Freiburg. After completing his doctorate, he worked in public administration. In 1960, he spent a year at Harvard University. He left public service in 1962 and went to the *Hochschule für Verwaltungswissenschaften* (University for Administrative Sciences) in Speyer, Rhineland-Palatinate, remaining there until 1965, when he moved to Munster to join the university's social research department. After completing his post-doctoral work, he was hired by the University of Bielefeld in 1969. He remained in this post until he retired in 1993 and passed away in Oerlinghausenin in 1998.

From Luhmann's work stems a vast body of intellectual work, involving the application of his hypotheses to diverse areas of knowledge, aiming to establish a new theory of society (Luhmann, 1997; 1998). He developed his theory at a time when sociological thought was in crisis and seemingly failing to account for the rapid and profound transformations that the world was experiencing. Classical theories seemed obsolete, unable to come to terms with the fact that old discussions – particularly regarding consensus and conflict, stability versus transformation – were no longer sufficient to account for the whirlwind of events making social interactions increasingly chaotic and unpredictable.

Classical paradigms were in crisis and this was marked by their inability to find explanatory models broad enough to simultaneously incorporate elements of change transformation and instantaneity, and at the same time, find some degree of rationality in this apparently chaotic contemporary world.(Giddens,1991;Bauman,1999;Capra, 2020) Within this context, Niklas Luhmann, an obscure public servant, began producing the work that would make him one of the most important proponents of contemporary social thought. His work attempted to recover the intelligibility of the world, with the bold ambition of creating a new general theory of society, which, abandoning classical definitions, would be built on a new foundation: communication.

Both being outstanding intellectuals of German philosophy and social thought, it would not be surprising if Luhmann had made contact with Schopenhauer's works, which could have inspired his own analyses and conception of social thought. However, Luhmann never suggests or acknowledges this influence, nor has he cited Schopenhauer in his main works. This absence is peculiar given that some relevant parallels are found between these authors' works.

We undertook a particular reading of the authors' works to carry out this comparative analysis; this represents one of many possible analyses, since as Max Weber (1995) clarifies, reality is immeasurable and holds infinite possibilities for observation. From this perspective, in this paper we highlight similarities that could possibly stem from a true influence – not publicly recognized – or may be just the fruit of an improbable and happy coincidence. Following the steps, we outline in this article, the reader may also possibly encounter the same points of contact within these theorists' thoughts and thus can draw his/her conclusions.

2.Literature review

2.1Shopenhauer and the World as Idea

According to Safranski (2018), Schopenhauer belonged to the "wildest" years of philosophy, the first half of the nineteenth century. This was a time of vibrant conflict and ideas, and within this context, Schopenhauer also showed a deep enmity towards most who most prominently represented this period. In *The World as Will and Representation,* he focuses on how people understand the world around them, and this leads him to define the world as something perceived by a cognizant subject in the form of an idea (or representation).

Schopenhauer introduces an inevitable distinction between the realm where objects are located and the other where subjects are situated. For him, the cognizant subject belongs to an existential plane distinct from that of other worldly objects. Thus, subjects themselves have no direct contact with material reality, although, contradictorily, they need a material body to exist. The cognizing subject is encased within a body but is not this body *per se*; he perceives his own body as a recognizable and privileged object – as it constitutes the place where all his faculties and potentialities combine and which he uses to understand and operate within reality.

Since the subject is linked to the body, and this body is linked to the existential plane of other objects, it allows him to perceive himself as an individual and, at the same time, to relate his/her sensory experiences to the material world. In defining the world as idea, Schopenhauer (2005) does not question the objective reality of the world, but merely shows that the operations that allow us to understand reality both constitute and exhaust this reality. In this way, no essence or truth of the object exists beyond what subjects capture through their sensory experiences, which is mediated through their understanding.

By configuring the real as something that can only be understood as an idea, Schopenhauer establishes the

intrinsic necessity of the cognizing subject. Thus, the "world as an idea" becomes inextricably linked to the cognizing subject, such that if the subject disappears, the world as an idea also ceases to exist (Schopenhauer, 2005). Therefore, reality, made as an object of knowledge presupposes the existence of a subject to whom it is object and manifests itself as idea.

The subject/object relationship emerges from the need to make the world intelligible in the context of the diverse ways through which it is manifested. While objects of knowledge are necessarily conditioned to a spatio-temporal existence, the subject is outside spatio-temporal limitations. In this way, it cannot maintain a direct relationship with the object. Placing the subject on a different existential plane means he is always the entity who knows, but is never himself known, as "knowing" presupposes that what is understandable be contained in this space-time relationship.

Schopenhauer (2005) states that object and idea are the same thing; that there is no object itself or essence, to be sought outside or beyond the object itself. However, he admits the existence of a "being of the object" by stating that "being" is action, which he understands as any kind of change or transformation that occurs in relation to the object. Yet, even from this perspective, the conception of that the world exists only for the cognizing subject still remains. This is evident because the whole reality of the object is only an idea for a subject, who thereby perceives the action, change or transformation that eventually occurs in the object. Data captured through the sensory experience will be reorganized into a subject's understanding as idea(s), and this constitutes the objective and immediate representation of what was perceived. Perceptions are formed by data captured from objects, including their actions or transformations; as such, the object is exhausted in the idea that the subject constitutes for it.

Thus, understanding is a function of the cognizing subject who is knowing and can only know based on what is immediately derived from reality, in the form of data, captured through the senses. The body is not the cognizing subject; on the contrary, the cognizing subject depends on the body because it is the body that allows it to exist. For the subject, the body remains as object and, according to Schopenhauer (2005), it is a special kind of object because it is the first and primary object that the cognizing subject perceives. Yet, like all other perceived objects, the body is also linked to universal forms of knowledge, space and time, which are the conditions that objectify its existence, and therefore, it must also be thought as an idea.

Other objects, or the world around us, are made of matter whose nature consists of its causal action. For this reason, cause and effect relations only exist to foster understanding. These actions allow for data capture through the senses – converting these perceptions into ideas and identifying the changes produced by objects upon each other, and at the same time, experience the power of material things to act upon each other.

While the role of understanding is to transform information from reality into ideas, it cannot distinguish what is true from what is false or employ any other kind of reflective approach because it operates only with abstract concepts – and is free from reason. According to Schopenhauer, since the immediate knowledge derived from perceiving the cause and effect of objects exhausts the object, all causality is contained in and for understanding, as only objects can causally explain other objects. As such, knowing the immediate causal links is the basic function of understanding.

The way in which objects affect one another other is understood through the principle of sufficient reason. This principle is the general expression for all objects and everything we can possibly know about the material world stems from them. At its core, this principle states that all objects maintain a necessary relationship with other objects and have relative existences – such that objects only exist in relation to others or as a function of how they affect other objects. For material objects whose true being is their action (Schopenhauer,2005), the way they affect or are affected determines the perception of its existence.

When an object presents itself differently from how it appeared before, it reveals a cause and effect relationship. Thus, if the idea of causality necessarily unites space and time, and the emergence of matter is only possible at the intersection of space and time, consequently the causal link between material objects, their interactions, and the perception of these interactions through understanding makes them necessarily linked in a space-time relationship. As such, no direct relationship between subject and object can exist, as the cognizing subject operates outside the time-space relationship between the subject and object.

Aligned with Schopenhauer's thoughts on the perception of permanence and change, we can also conceive of the concreteness of the material world. Reality, in this sense, is only understood when confronted with something initially present, which after undergoing a change remained permanent. At the same time, only because something remains after undergoing change is the nature of change established. Thus, objects' space/time relationships enable the perception of permanence and change.

As such, understanding operates by the effect searching for the cause, and causal action contributes to understanding to what extent matter constitutes the world and persists through space and time. The principle of causality (or the principle of sufficient reason), the logic from which understanding operates does not have eternal validity, nor does it have unconditioned validity, and thus it is considered a perception, an idea and not an incontestable truth.

The subject always remains alien to the principle of sufficient reason, as cause and effect relationships always occur between two objects and never between a subject and an object. Yet, we must not forget that the subject relies on understanding to make contact with the world of objects and their relations. As a consequence, reason only has access to concrete reality indirectly, after data captured by the senses are transformed into ideas and perceptions, further mediated by our faculty of judgment and then converted into concepts. Judgment is the mediator between understanding and reason; it carries ideas to abstract consciousness in the form of concepts.

Concepts in Schopenhauer's theoretical construct form a different class of ideas, as compared to ideas formed from sensory perception. They serve to make ideas of understanding permanent, and at the same time, because they operate only at the abstract level, they are related to other ideas that constitute rational thought. Reason never provides immediate knowledge of the world because immediate knowledge is constructed by understanding, and only later, after being mediated by the faculty of judgment, do they pass into abstract consciousness where reason can operate. Thus, reason does not increase knowledge because it only presents the ideas initially constructed through understanding. This is why concepts can be conceived, but not objectively known, barring when they produce some concrete effect and become objects of experience.

While fundamentally different from ideas, concepts are related to them. Once ideas are captured from perception as abstract concepts, reason operates in an entirely different way from understanding. In this case, we observe ideas constructed from ideas. In this way, abstract ideas differ ideas derived from perception because their role is not to know the world directly, but only to operate abstract rational knowledge. Thus, ideas and concepts belong to different epistemological classes or planes, while the principle of sufficient reason, which captures the relationship of the understanding pertaining to material objects always demands a relationship between ideas of the same class.

According to Schopenhauer (2005) concepts as abstract ideas of ideas can refer to different objects. And they always have something in common with the spheres of other concepts, since part of what one thinks is based on concepts present when thinking about other concepts. Each concept contains zones of intersection that collide with others, in which partially contains parts of another's sphere; however, each has its own space where the contents are not shared.

2.2.Luhmann and Society as Communication

Niklas Luhman's sociology seeks to understand the profound changes occurring during the second half of the twentieth century, in particular the intensification of communication that accompanied the flows of money, goods, and people. Such flows cross in all directions and reach social, political, economic, and environmental instances at ever-increasing speeds and densities – with levels of complexity difficult to fully interpret using the sociological concepts of the nineteenth century.

To make sense of contemporary social life and its characteristic complexity, Luhman (1990;1998) begins his analyses distinguishing between environment and system. In this context, the former is represented by the chaotic universe of communications and the latter is formed by sets of specialized structures whose purpose is to reduce complexity in order to process specifics type of communication and reject other types.

This process of selective specialization consists of allowing the system to connect similar and related communication types; however, due to the intrinsic characteristics of the environment and the system, even selected communications cannot pass directly from one to the other (from the environment to the system) and also maintain their integrity. Since passage is only possible through mediations and reconfigurations, communications inevitably suffer alterations and initial communications reach the system as noise. Here, noise refers to the condition of a deteriorated, distorted or somehow impaired communication, which still preserves some of its intelligibility. Thus, it differs from the indecipherable, superabundant and mechanically produced sounds that unpleasantly affect what people hear daily and is commonly referred as noise.

The system operates from its internal structures, although such structures have standard ways of processing communications; because they are highly specialized, systems can adapt and internally self-organize to the point that they become unstable. Such instabilities arise from the need to process variations contained in the diversity of communications, and when communications are similar, modifications are not made by internal processing operations. Thus, such a situation forces system to adapt to recover stability; and even if the communications are previously selected, they can still contain novelties (or new information), which the system needs to accommodate in order to process (Luhmann, 2001).

New internal structures arise when the system needs to perform new functions – or when the system cannot process or reject certain information because existing structures are inadequate. Thus, the system assumes the condition of information and information, in this way, is synonymous with novelty. According to Luhmann (2005), this type of adaptation consists of self-organization, internally creating new structures capable of incorporating the communications that arrive as novelties; this is the operation Luhmann calls autopoiesis.

To better elucidate the logic and necessity of autopoiesis, we can speculate about how the phenomenon of death would be treated by various social systems, especially the legal system. As an example, we focus on

cryogenics – the practice of freezing the dead with the expectation of bringing bodies back to life when futures technologies make this feasible. If some day it is possible to bring back the dead (today this is just a hypothesis), it would mean that a new internal structure (autopoiesis) within the legal system would need to be developed. Here, the novelty is represented by the possibility of someone considered dead returning to life, which today is not foreseen in our legal structures. Thus, the situation would destabilize the system, since its current state would have to deal with a new definition of life and death. This would completely change the concepts with which this system currently operates. Such a novelty would have direct and profound repercussions on the various branches of law that would have to internally self-organize in order to process it.

The same condition of instability is found in the possibility of human cloning. In this case, a new structure (autopoiesis) would need to be built to account for the legal issues brought forth for a person who comes into the world through an artificial process of genetic manipulation. Again, this situation is not adequately addressed in the legal system today. Thus, an individual born in this way cannot be guaranteed his/her interests.

Following this same reasoning, and now focusing on a process currently underway, we can reflect on the development of communication and information technologies. Today, with the constant expansion of the internet, social networks and new ways of conducting commercial transactions, and also of committing or facilitating the commission of crimes, whose effects on legal, economic, social and political systems are multiple, we observe the promotion of autopoietic self-organizations in all these systems. We further observe that transformations have not yet been adequately processed by these systems.

Assuming that such phenomena show up as novelties, that is, as information, the legal system, for example, would not be able to reject them because they are phenomena that have a legal dimension and therefore are in accordance with the codes that define legal phenomena. However, this same system would not be able to process such information because there would be no internal parameters, or as Luhmann (1985) would say, legal structures, capable of processing the information due to the degree of novelty they present.

This paradoxical situation would generate instability that could only be surpassed when the system changes internally to reorganize itself and process the novelty. Once processed, the novelty is then incorporated into already existing structures and the system would to process similar communications; from then on communications with similar characteristics cease to be novelties and are treated as simple communication.

Through autopoiesis the system is able to account for what it was unable to process in its previous condition, and thus performs the basic function of every system – to stabilize expectations and establish some degree of predictability within the chaotic complexity of communication flows (Luhmann, 2005a). This, thereby, allows the system to provide relatively standardized responses that allow for some degree of stability amid multiplicity and complexity.

Within this complexity, Luhmann highlights the difference between communication and information; for him, communication refers to the flow that reaches the system and can be processed and therefore does not destabilize it. Information, on the other hand, refers to a type of communication that is novel, for which the system initially cannot process due to a lack of adequate structures. This novelty thus destabilizes the system. In this way, information irritates the system, causing disturbance or destabilization and forces it to react. Communication, on the contrary, has no capacity to promote the system self-reorganization (Luhmann, 2005b).

Since it is impossible to make any direct connection between the environment and system, any communication that reaches the system comes through a mechanism called structural coupling. In Luhmann's theoretical construct (2005b), this mechanism mediates the internal operations of the system and the communication flows that occur outside the system. The system cannot employ its own operations to contact the environment because, being operationally closed, it only performs internal operations. It cannot operate in the environment because if it did, the system/environment difference would be destroyed and its focus on a specific type of communication, which is the fundamental characteristic of any system, would immediately disappear.

However, the system is also cognitively open and, through this condition, receives stimuli from the environment, although distorted and corrupted. This cognitive openness is obtained through the mediating function of the structural coupling, although such mediation implies the deformation of communication, as already mentioned.

To illustrate our point, we can take as an example the relationship between the human brain and the world around it. The brain only has an indirect and mediated contact with its surrounding environment. Any object from the real world never has access to and never acts directly on the brain. For a material object, such as a bird singing, to be processed as information by the brain, it needs to be captured by the senses (sight and hearing) and transformed into photochemical processes and acoustic waves. If the internal condition of the brain is taken as equivalent to operational closure, we find that the brain only “perceives” through mediation or use of the senses, hearing and vision in our example. Data from the outside can only be processed through this mediating body, otherwise communication from the environment cannot be assimilated by its internal structures.

The selection of events occurring in the environment, and capable of producing effects on the system, is an indispensable condition of a system; only in this way, can something be understood. From Luhmann's (2005a)

perspective, it is impossible to understand what goes on in society as a whole due to the infinity of processes, communications, and interactions that occur simultaneously. To deal with such a complex and multifaceted reality, specialized structures are needed to reduce the complexity of the world, formulating problems and answers within specific systems.

Luhmann considers that within the macrosystem called society, specialized microsystems are formed. Each microsystem is internally formed by a set of structures, each of them with its own degree of specificity and specialization whose function is to reduce the complexity that comes from the environment in the form of communication, and by doing so, the system itself develops, expands, and becomes more internally complex (Luhmann, 2005a; 2005b).

Each system serves to reduce the complexity of the environment because it is an attempt to channel communications of a specific type to highly specialized structures and thereby promote stabilization by creating a relatively standardized set of responses. This is roughly the way the human brain perceives the world around it.

3. Discussion

The first similarity between these two authors and their theories concerns the intrinsic nature of their works. Schopenhauer proposes to make some adjustments in Kantian theory while declaring war on Hegelian theory. He also shows special deference to some aspects of Plato's thought and to the principles of Indian philosophy, as he himself states (Schopenhauer, 2005). From these references, he makes explicit his attempt to present an essentially epistemological discussion, focused on the attempt to demarcate new limits to the possibilities of knowledge.

Although it is not easy to identify Luhmann's theoretical affiliations given the high degree of originality and theoretical density of his works, it is possible to identify whisperings of Harward, especially his contact with Talcot Parsons (Parsons 1966) and Piaget's constructivism (Becerra, 2014; Buchinger, 2012). Despite his intention to recover the role of metanarratives (Lyotard, 2008) and provide a new general theory of society, the end result is a perhaps unintended closeness to Schopenhauer's work.

Luhmann cultivates the same concern for the limits and possibilities of understanding reality; only that this time the “real” that must be understood relates to the dynamics of contemporary social life, namely communication. He considers communication as the most evident and powerful manifestation of contemporary society and through which we can understand society’s most advanced dynamics (Luhmann, 1990; 1998; 2001).

Like Schopenhauer, we do not find in Luhmann's theory a precise methodological instrument to operate his theory and construct knowledge regarding dynamics and objective facts. His discussions remain at the level of speculations on possibilities for comprehending reality. Although he tries to build knowledge on contemporary society, his contribution focuses on a new general sociological theory, aiming to account for the “problem” of complexity.

In the same way as Schopenhauer, Luhmann, tries to define the content of the “real” from a fundamental element, which for Schopenhauer would be the representation (or idea) and in Luhmann's case would be communication. It is possible to notice a certain compatibility between the way Schopenhauer establishes the impossibility of a direct relationship between subject and object, and the impossibility of direct relationship between system and environment as argued by Luhmann.

Both the cognizing subject (Schopenhauer) and the system (Luhmann) operate in different planes, partially isolated from the planes in which the objects of perception are located; in the case of the former, and the communicative environment, in the case of the latter. In both, this impossibility is related to the fact that the most refined structures of data processing (perceptions in the case of the former and communications in the case of the latter) are situated in planes of immanence (Deleuze and Guattari, 1992) different from those in which the objects from which such perceptions and communications originated are found.

While Luhmann repeatedly states that his systems theory does not include human beings as individuals, he nevertheless, argues that only two types of systems can perform autopoiesis: the social system and the psychic system (Luhmann 1990; 1998). By posing the question from this perspective, we argue that he reintroduces human beings in the scope of his analyses. He considers them as a system, and, put this way, it does not seem incongruous the possibility of making equivalent the perspectives of the individual who becomes a cognizing subject in Schopenhauer and the perspective of the individual thought as a system, which appears in Niklas Luhmann.

In Schopenhauer’s theory representation or idea has two essential and inseparable aspects, and their distinction constitutes the general form of knowledge, whether abstract or concrete. This first aspect is subject, that is, the one who knows everything but cannot be known because he/she can never be the object of knowledge. The other aspect is the object of representation (or idea), conditioned by space/time forms. The subject is outside space and time but is whole and undivided in all beings capable of representation, because their entire existence of what is perceived only has meaning for the subject that perceives them.

For Schopenhauer, the subject only perceives the reality of an object through its action, insofar as all matter

that constitutes the concrete world, whatever its stage of development or form of manifestation, has the possibility of transforming itself. For Schopenhauer the idea that an object exists existence outside representation is senseless and contradictory. This has similarities with Luhmann's idea that all social reality is related to changes occurring within communication flows, both in terms of the selection of specific types of communication processed by the system, and in terms of the novelties or changes that will come to be known by the system. While for Schopenhauer all that can be known of the object is its idea, or representation, for Luhmann all we know of contemporary society and what constitutes the reality of social life, is communication.

As a kind of paradox of consequences (Swedberg, 2005; Weber, 2001) or an unexpected result, both thinkers wind presenting a very representative picture of contemporary society. In other words, in thinking of reality as an idea (or representation), and as communication (which is also constituted from codified ideas), tells us a lot about the informational structures in which people are immersed, as a kind of objective realization of Plato's allegory of the cave. In general terms, we can infer that Schopenhauer's model of understanding with its focus on ideas of perception is similar to the flow of contemporary interactions, which Luhmann argues is captured from communication.

Another similarity is how both refer to the process understanding reality as needing a mediation mechanism. For Schopenhauer, understanding reality occurs through the senses, which will first collect data ultimately converted into ideas (or representations) and then to take on the form of abstract concepts to be assimilated by the consciousness and finally become the basis for our reasoning. We perceive in Schopenhauer a series of codifications that make the object lose its concreteness and become an abstract formulation.

Luhmann, in turn, provides an analogous explanation when he explains how communications coming from the environment reach the system. For this author, the fact that the system (including the psychic system) is autopoietic and operationally closed makes it necessary for communications to be submitted to a previous selection, a kind of code verification (Luhmann, 2005c). Each system has its code that determines if the communication will be allowed entry to the system, if it can be processed, or if it should be summarily rejected.

Once it is admitted, as a function of holding the appropriate code, the communication is liberated, the subsequent phase begins, which is its passage through the structural coupling and the internal reaction of the system. At this point the system knows whether or not it can operate with this communication or if it is a novelty (or information); in the case of the latter, the system will need to self-organize to process the novelty and incorporate it into its set of structures. In other words, the conceptual models of both authors are similar; the way the consciousness works in Schopenhauer and the internal structures of the system, in Luhmann, function as abstract mechanisms for knowing, recognizing, and responding to how they are affected by reality (i.e. the function suggested for the cognizing subject, in Schopenhauer and for the system, in Luhmann).

While these operations that convert data or communications from the external environmental into a new format to by assimilated into an internal environment, be it the consciousness (Schopenhauer) or the system (Luhmann), receive different conceptualizations, we observer a certain affinity between the two theories.

An equally important degree of similarity is present in how Schopenhauer's understanding and Luhmann's structural coupling operate. In Schopenhauer it is clear that it is impossible to directly transpose a sensory experience into consciousness; while in Luhmann, we see that communication cannot pass directly from the environment to the system without it being through structural coupling.

Luhmann justifies this impossibility by arguing that one cannot understand what goes on in society because its processes are infinite and communications and interactions occur simultaneously, increasing complexity. Using the example of the system of consciousness and its relationship with the environment, and here we can arbitrarily choose for this connection the system called communication, we will realize that these two systems are connected through the system we understand as (Luhmann, 1998; 2001).

Of course, language reduces the complexity of the environment (in this example the environment is made up of all other systems, which includes the communication system). At the same time, language imperfectly transforms a content of consciousness into communication. From the point of view of the consciousness system, language plays the role of a structural coupling agent, as there is no direct relation between consciousness and communication without this mediating this relationship. In this sense, language reduces the complexity of communication and the complexity of the consciousness to make communication possible. Each reduction signifies a decrease in the complexity on the one hand and an increase in complexity in the other. In general terms, the characteristic of structural coupling proposed by Luhmann performs a function similar to the one performed by the idea of understanding as conceived by Schopenhauer. All of this leads us to speculate that at some point Luhmann may have appropriated Schopenhauer's explanatory model to develop his own.

Equally important parallels can be found when one analyzes the internal structures in Schopenhauer or as proposed by Luhmann. We can identify analogies the role of the concept in Schopenhauer and the function of communication structures in Luhmann. The first serves to define the abstract conceptual formulations from which rational thought is made possible, begins to act as structure and allows for rational judgments. In the second, the construction the internal structures permit the stabilization of expectations, similarly to what occurs

in the consciousness. In both, stabilization allows for the development of a standardized set of abstract responses, which function as a conceptual apparatus of predictable responses.

4.Conclusion

When comparing the works of these important thinkers, attempting to identify similarities in their theoretical constructs is risky for two reasons: one because we did not find concrete evidence that Luhmann used Schopenhauer's works; and two because the points of congruence we identify are open to questioning and critique. Scholars specializing in these authors may certainly question the relatively summarized manner in which we treated some concepts and the rationale behind why we left many concepts out of our analysis. In this respect, we comment that we have only acted as *paploscopists* do[1]; these professionals analyze a certain number of coincidences in the lines of fingerprint to ascertain if a certain individual left his/her mark on a certain object.
Certainly, more work needs to be done to study these authors, but due to space limitations, it would not be possible to treat all their theories in this article. Specialists studying both Luhmann and Schopenhauer may assert the most diverse reasons to reject our arguments; however, this is not of our concern. When it comes to drawing parallels between thinkers situated in different contexts, from different disciplines and separated in time by almost a century and a half, specialists do not always reach consensuses on the boundaries and areas of work that they share.

In suggesting links between Schopenhauer and Luhmann we are aware that our endeavor may be doomed and attacked from all sides. We accept this onus and argue in favor of the novelty of our approach; we are confident that our work will spark interest in continuing our line of investigation. We limit ourselves to pointing out Schopenhauer's possible influence on the construction of contemporary sociological thought by showing that his contributions are far richer and offer far more *insights* than are usually attributed to him.

We believe that our main goal was achieved, both in terms of revealing the actuality of Schopenhauer's thought and suggesting its links to the foundations of Luhmann's thought. This is not surprising considering that Schopenhauer influenced philosophers and researchers from all scientific specialties (Kamata,2018). Both proposed their theories during critical moments. Schopenhauer reflects on the rather troubled context in which various social, political, and scientific conceptions compete, each claiming legitimacy and proposing new perspectives capable of accounting for the complex and simultaneous processes of the consolidation of industrial society, urbanization, the advancement of scientific discoveries; additionally, thinkers searched for the meaning of history and the destiny of humanity, all characteristic of the nineteenth century. Luhmann saw before him the events of the twentieth century, which became difficult to understand due to deep and radical technological transformations and the emergence of multiple protagonists, sometimes adopting contrary but equally legitimate positions; all of this raised society's complexity to a level never seen before. (Lipovetsky, 1989; Touraine, 1994; Santos, 2003)

We consider it significant that both authors who lived in different times, and who did not have direct contact, organized their perspectives on reality on such similar parameters of intelligibility. Since we cannot guarantee a direct link between Schopenhauer's and Luhmann's thought, we limit ourselves to suggesting what some points of coincidence within their explanatory models.

Recommendations

From the observation that it is possible to find similarities between the conceptual structure of apprehension of reality proposed by Schopenhauer and Luhmann, we believe that similarities linked to Schopenhauer can also be found in relation to other important theorists of Social Sciences such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, either to point out convergences or divergences, making comparative analyzes when these authors dealt with the same themes. Following in this direction, future works will be able to add new and significant nuances to the discussions that were initiated in this article.

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[1] Professionals who analyze and identify the dermal papillae of human beings in the process of recognizing individuals through their fingerprints.

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