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## ***Contra Naturam. A short Study into Leopardi and Schopenhauer's Meditations on Boredom***

My contribution intends to outline Giacomo Leopardi's considerations on boredom with the aim (1) of enhancing the speculative scope of this author, who is often better known as a poet than as a philosopher, and (2) of showing its assonance with Arthur Schopenhauer's observations on boredom.

Focusing on some crucial passages of the observations in *Zibaldone*, I will first sketch Leopardi's theory of boredom with particular attention to the consideration of it as a "passion most contrary to nature" (Z 2219).

In some ways the experience of boredom can be considered according to a phenomenological-anthropological approach – that is to say, the individual experiences boredom as inaction, flatness, lack of stimulus or excitement, monotony. This happens because of the interruption of the volitional and incessant dynamic of self-love that goes from a desire to its satisfaction or dissatisfaction (from which derive pleasure and pain in their different nuances) and to a new desire, and so on. Through all this, the events of life are flavoured and through the lens of the presence and resolution of boredom, between busyness and amusement, the social habits of peoples and their different levels of acceptance of philosophical speculation on this condition are revealed.

Leopardi adds a deeper level of reflection on boredom that dwells on the perceived sterility that it offers. It is a thought filled with nothingness, which casts a light of vacuity on the rest of experience and existence in the order of nature. Since the striving for happiness and pleasure are shown to be inconclusive and the bearer of suffering and dissatisfaction, boredom opens up a horizon of meaning that for Leopardi is intrinsically contradictory. In fact, human being comes into contact with the annihilation and the rejection of living according to the empty dynamic of desire, in total contrast to the natural existence of which she is a part, and

which ultimately allow her to question and deny her own life. But in securing this nihilistic, rational truth, the human being succumbs to nature, because she just perpetuates the illusion of a possible detachment from the ground of nature, an illusion similar to the feeling of a full and absolute nothingness that can come from the contemplation of boredom.

All these aspects can also be found in Arthur Schopenhauer's accounts of boredom, which extend to an anthropological-metaphysical horizon similar to that outlined by Leopardi, not only in the pages of *Zibaldone*, but especially in his poems. I will quickly try to account for the numerous symmetries that appear in their proposals, which arose independently, though in the same years, and which through a careful consideration of boredom gave rise to a Metaphysics and a Poetics related to it.

Once this brief examination has been concluded, I hope it will have become clearer what importance they had for the subsequent philosophical developments that were devoted to boredom, especially those of a Nihilistic and Existentialist kind, but also for the relevance that boredom has assumed in other research fields.