

Café Philosophy

 FEATURING

SIGMUND FREUD
ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER



ON THE FOURFOLD ROOT OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON

The 200th anniversary of Arthur Schopenhauer's first work, 'On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason' gives an opportunity to look back at this intriguing philosopher and see just why he has been so influential. This issue looks at his ideas from a variety of perspectives, and asks how relevant he is today. Schopenhauer is much more accessible than many of the classic German philosophers like Kant and Hegel, whose highly technical prose is impenetrable for many readers. Agree with him or not (and I myself am in the 'not' camp, finding his philosophy very well-constructed but ultimately unconvincing), to read Schopenhauer is to encounter a symposium of diverse voices dating back to ancient human history – for Schopenhauer was very well read and one cannot help but learn something of the classics by engaging with his work.

It is hard to measure Schopenhauer's influence on modern thought, but he seemed to stand at the cusp of a change in thinking about human civilization. The notion that we are basically ruled by irrational impulses sat uncomfortably with the Renaissance world of Schopenhauer's time which hoped for the establishment of human progress by the light of reason, which would gradually overcome our base instincts. Schopenhauer turned this on its head, claiming reason to be a mere servant of Will: a blind, dissatisfied striving which he thought to be the 'inner kernel' of reality. For him, the evolution of intelligence in so called higher beings merely came about so that the will's basic yearnings could be more effectively fulfilled. This way of thinking about human nature will be familiar to those who work in the fields of advertising and mass psychology. Freud the psychologist and Bernays the 'father' of public relations applied principles similar to those of Schopenhauer in their analyses of the human psyche, which would influence later generations of mass-manipulation experts.

It is probably obvious to most readers that media messages tend to aim primarily at our subconscious animal tendencies rather than the higher, reasoning or intuitive parts of human nature. Fear, anger and lust are powerful forces that exert considerable influence on the behavior of individuals and groups. By grabbing hold of those emotions and directing them towards a certain end - products can be sold, elections won and nations conquered. The psychology of mass communication is well understood by successful



Edward Bernays 1891–1995

advertising executives, PR consultants and spin doctors. Their techniques are based on assumptions about humanity that resonate with the views of Schopenhauer; views he put forth with immense detail and clarity.

Schopenhauer often indicated that he thought of his philosophy as expressing, in a better and more refined form, the core insights to be gleaned from all world religions. He didn't believe in a personal creator God, thinking it to be incompatible with what he saw as the chaotic, blind and even brutal nature of the universe. However, this atheist also had great admiration for various saints and spiritual masters. Through their rejection of purely selfish interests (a process which he called 'denial of the will'), they exemplified for Schopenhauer a rare kind of human being who could rise above the struggling, striving mess of competing urges for survival and help put an end to the suffering which flows from them. Like religious saints and mystics, Schopenhauer believed that the negative experiences of life could be transcended or at least greatly diminished. However, in order to reach a state of greater equanimity and inner peace we would have to fight against the very nature of the world - perhaps, even, the essence of who we are.

In Schopenhauer's worldview the crucifixion of Jesus Christ symbolises the complete abolition of willing for oneself, while in the Buddha's life compassion takes the place of suffering when the powerful desires in human nature are extinguished. Of all world religions,

Buddhism is probably the most similar to Schopenhauer's philosophy. Both advocate elimination of desire as the way to solve human problems, with no belief in a personal God required. Schopenhauer even used the term nirvana to speak of the state reached when the will is successfully conquered. Through his writings, Schopenhauer was partly responsible for hastening the spread of Eastern philosophy to the West. He referred to the Upanishads, India's ancient scriptures, as the solace of his life, keeping them by his bedside for regular reading.

We may well disagree with Schopenhauer's assessment of life, viewing it as cynical or pessimistic. His theory that the underlying essence of everything is senseless and irrational has an element of the 'glass half empty' viewpoint; it is inherently subjective. In building his case, Schopenhauer relies very much on concrete examples of cruelty from the natural world, such as baby turtles being devoured en masse by a ferocious predator. However, another person looking at the same world for clues to its inner nature could choose to focus on the many acts of kindness, goodness and bravery that make up everyday life as being more reflective of the nature of reality. The curious mix of circumstances on planet earth, ranging from horrendous suffering to ecstatic jubilation, make it easy to swing either way in terms of making judgments about what kind of universe we live in. These are fascinating questions to ponder, even if there are no easy answers.

by DR EVA CYBULSKA 2012

THE DENIAL OF THE WILL-TO-LIVE IN LITERATURE AND MUSIC

Eva Cybulska considers Schopenhauer's influence on writers and composers.

“TO THOSE IN WHOM THE WILL HAS TURNED AND DENIED ITSELF, THIS VERY REAL WORLD OURS, WITH ITS SUNS GALAXIES, IS – NOTHING.”

Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, I: p.412 (from the 1969 edition, E.F.J. Payne trans., Dover Publications Inc.)

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was, and continues to be, a philosopher in a class of his own. He is mostly admired for the richness, depth and brilliance of his insights rather than for his consistency of vision. His writing style, clear and high voltage, is enriched by his poetic gift of condensing an abstract idea into a single powerful image. His satirical wit, provocativeness and panache makes the bravado of *Private Eye* magazine pale by comparison. His comments on Hegel, his arch-rival, as a “dull charlatan and an unparalleled scribbler of nonsense” are even libellous.

From an early age, Schopenhauer was bewildered by the world. He attempted to solve the riddle of existence in terms of a single thought: he came to believe in the unity of the inner nature of all things, and christened this underlying nature 'the Will'. In his magnum opus, *The World as Will and Representation*, originally published in 1818, the Will is Schopenhauer's equivalent of Kant's 'thing-in-itself'. According to Kant we generally perceive only the world of appearances (the phenomenal world in Kant's terminology), while the world as it is in itself, independent of the way it appears to us to be (Kant's noumenal world) remains unknowable and beyond our reach. Schopenhauer believed the 'reality beyond appearance' is endowed with immense, ruthless power. He called it 'the Will', and saw it as a kind of unconscious universal striving.

The concept of the Will seems to have acquired the quality of a mantra in his writings; and like all things sacred, the concept disdains a detailed explication. Some commentators, for example Bryan Magee in his book *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, see Schopenhauer's idea of Will as an anticipation of the twentieth century's scientific idea of energy, as a unifying force with multifarious manifestations. Quite ingeniously, Freud also adapted the Will as the id – an “unconscious and unknown” yet all-powerful part of the self (*The Ego and the Id*, 1923).

Schopenhauer never founded a school of followers. Yet hardly any modern philosopher, with the possible exception of Nietzsche (his one-time worshipper), can claim greater influence on literature and the arts. This has usually happened through Schopenhauer's articulation of deeply held proto-ideas, which resonated with many creative geniuses. He was widely read, as much in Classical Greek and Latin as contemporary literature, and he was also well versed in the Eastern philosophical tradition. Although he was a self-proclaimed atheist, his philosophy of compassion reveals a highly spiritual, albeit embattled, soul. His love of music objectified itself not only in his playing the flute, but in the penetrating critical insights which were to have such an impact on Wagner, Mahler, Scriabin and other composers.

DEATH AS THE CANONISATION OF SUFFERING

“Dying is certainly to be regarded as the real aim of life; at the moment of dying, everything is decided, which through the whole course of life was only prepared and introduced.”

WWR II, p.637

The Will's ruthless energy is a source of great creativity, but it is also a source of evil and strife, being the ultimate cause of all suffering. And for Schopenhauer, life was mostly suffering! To him there are three ways of escaping the strife caused by the Will: aesthetic contemplation, ascetic conduct, and death. He concurred with Silenus, the companion of Dionysus, that “the best thing is not to be born; the second best is to die as soon as one can.” As he wrote: “If we knocked on the graves and asked the dead whether they would like to rise again, they would shake their heads.” He also quotes Voltaire: “We like life, but all the same nothingness also has its good points.” After all, “Non-existence after death cannot be different from non-existence before birth” (WWR II, p.465). Death can also be a great inspiration: “without death there would be hardly any philosophising!” he wrote (WWR II, p.463).

To Schopenhauer, death can be seen as a form of a return to a timeless, unconscious eternity. Philip Larkin expressed this Schopenhauerian desire for oblivion with his usual ironic humour in his poem Wants:

*Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs:
Despite the artful tensions of the calendar,
The life insurance, the tabled fertility rites,
The costly aversion of the eyes from death*

Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs.

Dealing with the fear of death lies at the heart of all religious creeds, and offering consolation is one of their main tasks. Following the demise of religion in the West, philosophy must carry the Socratic torch and teach us how to end the never-ending cycle of suffering. Hamlet expressed his readiness to do that, philosophically: “If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all” (Hamlet, Act V, Sc. II).

As a young man, Schopenhauer read Hamlet in English, and it may well have inspired his subsequent philosophical deliberations. Below are some considerations of a brief selection of literary and musical works influenced by Schopenhauer.

WAGNER'S LIEBESTOD AND MAHLER'S ADAGIETTO

“We find in music, in the melodies of which we recognise the universality expressed, the innermost story of the Will conscious of itself”

WWR I, p.321

Richard Wagner discovered Schopenhauer's masterpiece in 1854, at the age of forty-one, and became besotted with it. He reread it three times in rapid succession, and would speak of this “gift from heaven” to anyone who would listen. Schopenhauer's view of music “as a direct objectification and copy of the whole Will as the world itself” (WWR I, p.333) was music to Wagner's ears. Wagner conceived of his thoroughly Schopenhauerian masterpiece Tristan and Isolde in Venice, whilst on the run with Mathilde von Wesendonck, the wife of his benefactor. With despotic amorality Wagner wrenched his two fictional lovers away from the world of cause, reason and responsibility. Flung into the Schopenhauerian world of relentless, blind Will, Tristan and Isolde become play-things at the hands of fate. Not for nothing did Nietzsche consider Wagner a direct descendent of Aeschylus, and through him he hoped for a revival of ancient Greek tragedy.

Schopenhauer viewed “Eros as being secretly related to death” (Parerga and Paralipomena I, p.497), and this is how the anguished passion of Wagner's star-crossed lovers dissolves into oblivion:

*In the surging swell,
In the ringing sound,
In the world-breath
In the waves of the All
To drown,
To sink, to drown
Unconscious
Supreme bliss*

Tristan and Isolde: Act III, Scene III

Gustav Mahler was born in 1860, the year Schopenhauer died. Tristan and Isolde was one of the operas he most revered, and, not surprisingly, Liebestod (“love death”) forms a discrete canvas for the mournful Adagietto, the penultimate movement of Mahler's Fifth, ‘fateful’ Symphony. In it Mahler interweaves the celestial with a

hint of the infernal. Alma Schindler, one of the most desired young women in Vienna at the time, was the fortunate recipient of this wordless declaration of love, and of a proposal of marriage. She also adored Tristan, and instantly understood and accepted the offer. But there was a tragic twist to the tale. Years later, Alma's affair with Gropius was the final blow of fate that hastened Mahler into the grave. It was not until the composer's death that Alma, as Isolde, came to realise that Mahler was the Tristan she loved.



◀ Walter Gropius



Gustav Mahler



Alma Mahler

DEATH IN VENICE AND THE ECSTATIC AESTHETIC MOMENT

*He who ever gazed upon beauty,
Has already succumbed to death.*

August von Platen, ‘Tristan’

Thomas Mann was visiting Venice in May 1911 when the news of Mahler's death reached him. Subsequently his novella, Death in Venice, became a tribute to the composer he had personally known and admired. It was also homage to Schopenhauer, his philosophical mentor, whose magnum opus he called a “symphony in four movements.” The chief protagonist of Death in Venice, Gustav von Aschenbach, finally becomes a will-less and timeless subject of knowledge, thus escaping from the temporal striving of the Will. In an ecstatic moment of aesthetic delight (Wohlgefallen),

he is released from the prison of time and space – the prison of ‘individuation’ in Schopenhauer's terminology. In the film version, this moment is condensed in the image of von Aschenbach (played impeccably by Dirk Bogarde) leaning out of a window, gazing at the boy Tadzio, the embodiment of beauty. Indeed, the theme of a gaze – be it into one's own soul, into beauty, or into nothingness – is one of the principal leitmotifs in the novella, and is even more prominent in the film.

Mann based Death in Venice on a real encounter with a young aristocratic Pole, Wladyslaw (Wladzio) Moes, whom he first saw in the dining room of La Grand Hôtel des Bains on the Venetian island of Lido. The boy was ten years old at the time, and later he recalled how an ‘old man’ (even though Mann was only thirty-five at the time) followed him and his companion Jasju wherever they went. He remembered an exchange of lascivious glances on the escalator. ‘Gustav von Aschenbach’ was Thomas Mann's auto-portrait who, in the manner of Dorian Gray, suffered in place of the author.

In the 1971 film adaptation, Visconti ingeniously combined the strands of literature, breathtaking images of decaying Venice, the Schopenhauerian idea of death as a welcome release from life, and the most sublime music. Wagner died in Venice in February 1883, and we catch a glimpse of his bust in the Gardenico during the opening scene of the film. Mahler's Adagietto forms the soundtrack, and it became instantly popular. The still waters of the Venetian lagoon resemble the menacing, deadening pool of Narcissus. In the closing scene of the film, an ambiguous, quivering smile fades away from von Aschenbach's mask-like face as his body sinks wearily into the deckchair. Like Narcissus, he dies alone, unloved, whilst gazing into the image of Tadzio, who beckons him into the bliss of non-being, indicating that life is a tragic charade from which only death can offer a release. Even Schopenhauer could not have bettered this visual condensation of his thought.

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES: NECESSITY VERSUS FREEDOM

“Necessity is the kingdom of nature; freedom is the kingdom of grace”

WWR I, p.523

Thomas Hardy could be regarded as a natural Schopenhauerian. Like Schopenhauer, Hardy sees nature as blind, immutable and indifferent. Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891) was Hardy's penultimate novel,

and one might argue that Tess, its heroine, was an embodiment of the writer's melancholic anima (in Jungian psychology, the anima is the female principle of the personality). Tess is, perhaps, the most poignant literary transmutation of the idea that being born is an error, and that death is emancipation from the prison of life. From the outset, she longs for an extinction of consciousness, and her sad, futile life plays its small part in the universal tragedy of existence. For Hardy, nature, man and existence itself are ultimately one, and we often find that nature reflects Tess's despair: "the occasional heave of the wind became the sigh of some immense sad soul."

Tess acts as if driven by some powerful, yet invisible force (ie the Will) against a background of cosmic indifference. By "abandoning herself to impulse" and climbing into Alec's carriage, Tess sets off on the path to her own destruction. Later, Alec rapes her while she walks alone in a dark wood (an event which Freud would no doubt have interpreted as wish-fulfilling). The child born afterwards, whom she names Sorrow (Hardy could hardly have thought of a more Schopenhauerian name!), dies early, as if following Silenus's advice. Tess's two lovers – the moralistic, yet compassionless, Angel, and the demonic, id-driven Alec – seem to externalise the inner contradictions of her embattled soul. When she finally kills Alec, she also kills a vital, albeit unacknowledged, part of herself, and her fate is sealed.

Has Tess any real choice, or is she driven by forces outside her control, an almighty necessity? Life is determined by an irrational and pervasive Will, Schopenhauer would say: you do not determine your own destiny, and freedom can only be found in the cessation of willing and the annihilation of individual consciousness. This is the freedom of extinction. Uncannily echoing Hamlet, in the closing moments of the novel Tess expresses resignation to the Will: "What must come, will come." With a serenity of composure she surrenders her consciousness on the altar at Stonehenge. The setting amplifies a sense of eternally passing time, and the monoliths suggest a stony indifference and immutability. As she re-joins the elements, the cosmic cycle is complete.

THE DEATH AND THE LIGHTNESS OF BEING OF PRINCE VOLKONSKY

Tolstoy not only read Schopenhauer's philosophy, but lived it, by abandoning earthly desires and turning to asceticism. In his War and Peace (1869), Prince Andrei Volkonsky is a Schopenhauerian character par excellence. He courts death all his life. Trapped in a loveless marriage, he lives as if out of duty. Following the death of his wife,

he lives for his son, but all this changes when he meets Natasha Rostov, the embodiment of vivacity. He falls in love with her, and with life. Unfortunately his father, who despises the Rostovs, tries to obstruct the marriage by imposing a year of delay, hoping that this will break their love. It nearly does, as Natasha becomes infatuated with Anatoli – a passion as violent as it is shallow. Andrei joins the war against Napoleon, perhaps in search of death – a suicide disguised as the heroic defence of one's country would be a noble solution to the problem of disappointed love. Meanwhile Natasha comes to her senses and realises that it's only Andrei whom she has ever loved. Too late! Andrei is mortally wounded at the Battle of Borodino and comes home only to die. Natasha, torn by a mixture of guilt, tenderness and hope, takes care of him, but it soon becomes clear that they can be united only in death.

Tolstoy describes the Prince's departure from the world in Schopenhauerian terms:

"Prince Andrei not only knew he was going to die but felt that he was dying, that he was already half dead. He felt remote from everything earthly and was conscious of a strange and joyous lightness in his being. Neither impatient nor anxious, he awaited what lay before him. That sinister, eternal, unknown and distant something which he had sensed throughout his life was now close upon him, as he knew by the strange lightness of being that he experienced, almost comprehensible and palpable."

Tchaikovsky's Symphony Pathétique:
Crossing the Acheron

**Vex thee not, Charon;
It is so willed there where is power to do
That which is willed; and farther question not.**

Dante, Divine Comedy, Inferno: Canto III

The Pathétique was Tchaikovsky's most tragic, most confessional work. The work commences and ends in nothingness, and has a descending spiral structure reminiscent of the funeral bells of the Russian Orthodox Church. The first movement opens in a murky, foreboding mood, which is suddenly interrupted by an upsurge of a fateful four-note figure, initially announced by the wind section. As the melody gathers strength, it is taken over by the strings. The forces of life and death, consciousness and oblivion, light and darkness, reach a climax, and the melody is then carried by a single violin, as if Charon were ferrying the listener across the river Acheron. The memories of passionate but also painful moments return briefly in the form of an undanceable waltz. But are

memories enough to sustain life? In the last movement, the forces of life make a final attempt at a comeback, with a vehemence that only reinforces its futility. The decrescendo finale, highly unusual in Tchaikovsky's time, makes one feel as if one were descending into the grave, or into Dante's Inferno. Barely audible sounds mark the final capitulation to the Will. From a mist we came and to a mist we return; beneath it all, desire for oblivion runs.

LEON: THE PROFESSIONAL STARRING GARY OLDMAN, JEAN RENO & NATALIE PORTMAN



First released in 1994, Léon: The Professional a French thriller starring Jean Reno, Gary Oldman and the young Natalie Portman was a cult hit in Europe. Léon is now being re-marketed for the video rental market. There is also an extended version of the film, referred to as "international version" or "version intégrale" containing 25 minutes of additional footage, it is sometimes called the "Director's Cut," and is available to rent from Video Ezy on a Blu-ray release.

Léon: The Professional is written and directed by Luc Besson and produced by Patrice Ledoux. The film's Lolita theme, along with its hard-core violence and a truly psychotic performance by Gary Oldman was never going to give the movie widespread popularity, but it is essential none the less.

by DR EVA CYBULSKA 2012

Eva Cybulska is an independent scholar and writer living in London. Formerly a psychiatrist, she is currently working on her book Nietzsche: A Hero's Journey into Night. Please visit her blog at thoughtsatthemeridian.blogspot.co.uk.

This article first appeared in the U.K. philosophy magazine; Philosophy Now, issue 91.

As Martin Liebman says:

"Léon is an exceptional film on every level: thematically, emotionally, and technically. The star of the film isn't the action but rather the meaning behind it, an engrossing look at the loss of innocence, the quest for vengeance, and the search for purpose in life. Few Action films cover such a broad spectrum of emotion as Léon, and its deeper philosophical overtones are supported by a trio of exceptional performances, notably from Gary Oldman in a trademark performance, all of which accentuate the action many times over. Sony's Blu-ray release is technically solid. Both picture and sound quality are very good, and the included supplements are few in number but rather high in quality."

<http://www.blu-ray.com/movies/Leon-The-Professional-Blu-ray/6964/#Review>

IS LEON A GOOD GUY?



Mike Parker analyses the character of the eponymous anti-hero through the moral philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer.

The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer is notorious for his endemic pessimism and general misanthropy. While this assessment is hard to counter, we should not take this to be a negative trait: far from it. My aim in this review is to look at one aspect of his work, his understanding of a good moral character, and to use this as a practical tool for analysing the fictional character of 'Leon.'

In Leon, The Professional (1994 Luc Besson) the eponymous central figure is a ruthless assassin; a monastic individual whose life outside of his role as hit man for the local mafia is desolate. The only adult relationship Leon has is with the Italian mobster Tony, who Leon mistakenly regards as a protective paternal figure. This insincere relationship is

beneficial for Tony, who preys on Leon's naivety, coldly fostering Leon's talent for clinical assassination. In this absence of human warmth and companionship, Leon pathetically turns his atrophied affection towards a pot plant ("my best friend" as he calls it); an unlikely companion for an archetypal hired killer.

In the early scenes of the film there is little about Leon that we can see as morally good. The evidence we are given – his brutality and ruthless efficiency at killing, together with his lack of normal human interaction – would suggest that our feeling for the character should be negative. But this is not the case. Almost from the outset our perception of Leon is that he is innately good, regardless of his 'professional' ability as an assassin. To explain this we need to know a little about Schopenhauer's thoughts on morality.

Schopenhauer categorically denied the possibility of free will. Instead, he presented us with the idea that all our actions emanate from a series of powerful

motivations, and that these motivations arise prior to our intellectual understanding of them: "In the real world, what sorts of things motivate actions?" he asks. "Do any actions or motivations actually occur which even after careful analysis we still want to describe as moral in any approving sense?" (On the Basis of Morality: p168.)

For Schopenhauer, we are practically and logically incapable of a consciously independent act of free will. The pursuit of our strongest unconscious motivations always precedes reasoning choice. For example, if I have a lifelong loathing of coffee, it is unlikely I would choose this beverage in a restaurant. Further to

this, if I consciously chose to ignore my loathing of coffee and then forced myself to drink it, it would probably be seen as an act of lunacy rather than of free will: "It is never suggested by Schopenhauer that people behave morally because they possess a correct theoretical understanding of what is involved. On the contrary, because we cannot decide what we are going to will, and because it is the will that governs our behaviour, conceptual knowledge can no more generate valid moral activity than it can generate valid artistic activity." (Bryan Magee, Schopenhauer p 199.)

The burning desire to follow one's strongest motivation is, in its rawest sense, pure animal instinct. However, Schopenhauer recognised that as human beings our motivations are significantly more complex than this. As a necessary feature of our success as social beings, we have produced a series of external checks and balances simply to elevate the interests of the group or species above those of the individual.

For Schopenhauer our motivations are given to us

at birth, as instincts. They distinguish us as individuals to the same extent as physical characteristics do. Crucially though, the power of social conditioning can very effectively disguise our natural inclinations, so that people can act according to their cultural training in ways contrary to what they naturally feel. Correct ethical interpretation for Schopenhauer should always recognise those aspects of character that are innately good or innately bad. This is, of course, never easy to do.

The suicide bomber who regards his actions as originating from a natural moral base is, for Schopenhauer, merely extending his own individual egoism through the promise of a better life in paradise. Similarly, the celebrity who brazenly attaches her public identity to charitable causes surreptitiously promotes her own self-interests. But if it is possible that some explicitly good actions can conceal an implicitly bad character, it follows that some explicitly bad actions can disguise an innately good character. Enter Leon.

Raised in the notorious vengeance culture of Sicily, Leon committed his first assassination at the age of 16, murdering the father of his first love. Arriving in America, he was befriended by local Italian mobster Tony who recognised Leon's natural ability to 'clean'. Besson then gives us an emotionally detached character; reclusive, coming into his own only when his hit-man skills are put into practice, or as he puts it, "when I go to work. I hate being late for work."

We are, however, unsure if the character is in fact a ruthless psychopathic killer by inclination (we know he has the skills to 'do the job') or if – and this is the crucial connection to Schopenhauer – his circumstances have instead led him down a path whereby no credible alternative lifestyle could have occurred. Leon had no choice about being born in a ferocious revenge culture; this was imposed on him. He had no choice other than to use his skills to enable him to survive. He had no choice other than to escape to the only subculture with which he was familiar – mob culture.

Leon is portrayed by Besson as a split person. He is a comfortable assassin – a job he has learned, and is the best at. But in contrast to this calling, he is also a pathetic child-man who gapes in awe at movies portraying 'the joy of life', in particular, Gene Kelly's Singing In The Rain. At all other times Leon is nothing, a void of a person, hermetic, with no motivation other than to drink milk and care for his beloved plant.

by MIKE PARKER

So who is the 'real' Leon? We get to know his implicit character through his enforced relationship with Mathilda, his precocious 12-year-old neighbour. Mathilda is the catalyst which allows Leon's natural humanity to come to the fore. One particular scene is decisive in our assessment of his good moral nature.

Following the brutal assassination of her dysfunctional family at the hands of crazed, corrupt DEA agent Norman Stansfield, Mathilda flees into a narrow corridor. To go back would lead to the police murderers. The way forward leads to Leon's door. In complete turmoil, she presses Leon's bell. His honed skills enable him to assess the situation in an instant. He knows not only that the girl will be killed if he fails to open the door, but also that his interaction could prove lethal too. His involvement would oppose all of his training as a reclusive assassin.

Schopenhauer would have presented us with a simple question at this point. Given that we know Leon to be a brutal killer – and therefore bad – would we expect him to open the door? Our answer to this has to be no. If, however, his ability to kill was just acquired as an accident of life, effectively disguising Leon's innate character, what might we expect him to do? It would be a straightforward moral action: he helps another person in extreme distress, with the possibility he may be killed – or he does not. For Schopenhauer this situation would be a pure test of the innate goodness of an individual: the possibility of the foregoing of self-interest for the sake of compassion. Leon's door opens to a flood of light which physically overwhelms Mathilda – a scene of accomplished cinematic skill by Besson. We are now left in no doubt as to the inherent moral character of Leon. He is a good guy.

The rest of the film is an unfolding of Leon's humanity. Against all his reasoned judgement (he tries on several occasions to detach himself from Mathilda), he nevertheless takes the child under his wing, and teaches her the skills of the assassin. Once again here our judgement is tested. Leon is clinically training a child to kill; an outwardly reprehensible act. But by now we have a moral base which validates our affinity for both characters. The coldly clinical effectiveness of their profession is offset by the affection they share for each other. And in rejecting Mathilda's naive yet overt sexual advances, we again see a man overcoming a primeval motivation, the result of which is behaviour of pure moral worth.

This is Schopenhauer's moral philosophy in action. A good man with no outward reason to be good: an individual whose life experience has been overwhelmingly negative (in an early scene Mathilda asks Leon, "Is life always this bad?" and he answers "Always.") Even given all of this he cannot become an innately bad person. For Schopenhauer, no matter how much we educate ourselves to be good or bad, it is all ultimately to no avail: "Even the highest intellectual eminence can co-exist with the greatest moral depravity." (The World as Will and Representation 2: p.228).

Leon's death, a sacrifice offered to the two life forces he perceives with pureness of heart (Mathilda and the symbolic plant), is much more than a resolution of a tragic theme. It is a reflection of a natural morality which can transcend all external influence. Our sense of loss is overcome by the realisation that even in our morally-bankrupt human condition individuals such as Leon, will always shine through with:

"A special goodness of heart, which, as I have said, exists very rarely indeed."

An ultimately optimistic position to hold! (WWR 2: p.228.)



by MARK PARKER 2007

Mike Parker completed a PhD at the University of Central Lancashire.

This article previously appeared in Philosophy Now magazine.

by IRVIN YALOM

THE SCHOPENHAUER CURE

Andrew Barley enters group therapy with Irvin Yalom.

Irvin Yalom is Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry at Stanford and is the author of one of his profession's standard texts, *The Theory and Practice of Group Therapy*. But nestled beneath the title of Yalom's new book *The Schopenhauer Cure* are the words, 'A Novel'. The words seem miserly for a book filled with so much. For beside the novel's story there's an interlaced psychological biography of the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, Yalom's hallmark therapeutic tips woven in and twelve pages of reference notes. It is a tremendous achievement and an absorbing read built on months of research and original translation work.

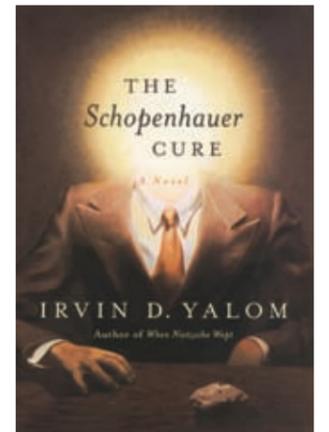
Julius Hertzfeld, a distinguished psychotherapist, discovers that he has only a year to live. He decides that the best way to spend his remaining time is to continue doing what he has loved most, his therapy work. Philip Slate is a remote scholar, and an ex-patient of Julius. He is a Schopenhauer enthusiast, and wants to become a philosophical counsellor. Curiously, they need each other. Julius needs Philip as a target for his 'ripe' therapeutic powers; the patient he was unable to help. Philip needs Julius to approve his step to philosophical counsellor. Philip joins Julius' therapy group, but disrupts the group with his insistence that all they need is the philosophy of the notoriously pessimistic and grumpy Schopenhauer. So through Philip and Julius, the novel sets up an impossible, but believable, encounter as 'Schopenhauer' (Philip) comes to group therapy with 'Yalom' (Julius).

As the story progresses Yalom introduces his psychological biography of Arthur Schopenhauer. Developing the life behind 'Philip', these chapters enhance the novel and are interesting in their own right. Schopenhauer tends to be caricatured by his critics and curtailed off by his fans so Yalom's portrayal is refreshing in its sympathy and depth. Arthur Schopenhauer was born in 1788 into an austere and rigid household ruled by his dour father. His destiny was to take over the long-standing family mercantile business. Arthur craved scholarship but he was readied for business. An offer of a grand tour of Europe, something he could not refuse, sealed his fate. Then, on the family's return to Germany, his father

commits suicide. Sprung free you might think that Arthur would take off. Instead, he struggled to be free. Eventually he became the scholar he always wanted to be but he was never really free, least of all in relating to other people.

As you might expect with Yalom's approach to group therapy, there is much about the 'interpersonal focus'. But there is more. As Philip and Julius square up to each other Nietzsche's influence on Yalom comes out. Where Schopenhauer's answer to life is an ascetic overcoming of desire, Nietzsche's is life affirming. Nietzsche challenges us to live "in such a manner that we'd say yes if we were offered the opportunity to live our life again and again in precisely the same manner." While clearly disagreeing with an ascetic answer to life Yalom values a great deal of what Schopenhauer has to say. He is widely quoted and praised. With

Philip and Julius, Yalom has deliberately framed them as 'fellow travellers' – his conception of the therapist/patient relationship. This too resonates with Schopenhauer's recognition of life, of being "in it together." The *Schopenhauer Cure* feels like a very poignant and personal book. It is also a fine testament to the author's belief that we should each aspire 'to create beyond oneself'.



by ELLE HUNT

BREAKUP PHILOSOPHY -- FOR THE BROKEN HEARTED

A twenty-something navigates heartbreak by Schopenhauer.

“Almost all of our sorrows spring out of our relations with other people,” wrote Schopenhauer in an essay called ‘Lebensweisheit’ – ‘Worldly Wisdoms’ – in 1851.

If I didn't know better, I'd say it sounds like Schopenhauer liked someone who didn't like him back.

There are few feelings worse than unrequited love. I should know: my own experience was as drawn-out and painful as they come, and threw me for the best part of two years. I cared for him in a way that he didn't for me. It sounds simple enough, but it's only in the past few months that I've had the revelation, as bracing as cold water in its clarity, that a relationship (at least in the aspirational sense of the word) was never on the table.

The experience has taught me this: that ever-open lines of communication, widely understood to be a key component of successful relationships, are even more important in the lead-up to a potential union, when both unions are circling each other and smelling the air and asking “What are we?” At that juncture, it's crucial that both sides are on the same page – because it's easier for someone whose powers of deduction have been diminished by unrequited love to be told “No” than it is for them to infer it from even the most obvious of hints.

In short, people in love aren't rational, and those whose feelings are not returned, even less so. They can't be expected to expose empty promises and white lies for what they are, or have the presence of mind to gracefully extract themselves from the ambiguity in which they are mired. They are like drunk people, or horses, or dogs: you've got to really spell it out.

A special kind of senselessness is reserved for those in the throes of unrequited love, and if we are to minimise the sorrows that spring from this most thankless kind of relationship, we need to be honest with them. If, at any point over the 18 months I spent in a love-struck limbo, I had been told “Not now, not ever”, my own unhappiness would never have reached the apex it did. Instead, my hope was kept alive by circumstantial excuses – about our friends, our jobs, our living situations – and vague references to “some time in the future”.

I recognise those now as an exercise in “letting her down gently”, perhaps borne of empathy, that had the opposite effect of prolonging a situation that needed to be ended quickly, cleanly, and kindly. Even though no formal commitment had been breached, I'd argue that in cases of unrequited love, the person who doesn't reciprocate feeling – being in full command of their emotional capacities and thus in the position of power – has a moral obligation to the vulnerable party to put them out of their misery. And take it from me, “misery” is not too strong a word.

At a recent gathering of friends, a philosophy student put to us the question of Robert Nozick's experience machine: could we ever be content with the illusion of lived experience, as generated by the machine, or would we rather real life with no guarantee of happiness? Most agreed that they'd live in the machine, but at the time I was adamant I'd rather the authentic than artifice, no matter how painful. Since my experience with unrequited love, I'm ready to change my mind.

In fact, Nozick's machine is just the thing I'd like to plug into before I start dating again: with no chance of history repeating, I'd happily sign up for any number of inauthentic encounters that were at least guaranteed to be enjoyable. Never before have I so wholeheartedly subscribed to Schopenhauer's philosophy that the pursuit of love is, in essence, futile.

So, in the meantime, I am learning to be alone – to have, as Schopenhauer said, “so much in yourself that you don't need a companion.” A lot of my strategies reflect his belief that art alleviates the pain intrinsic to human desire, though it's not known whether he would have counted trashy television and pop music as “art”. In the weeks after I was disillusioned about love, I watched all six seasons of *Sex & The City* and one of the two truly dreadful films in too short a timeframe to be advisable. But as a ploy to keep my mind on others' romantic unhappiness and off my own, it worked.



Illustration by Bill Stidham
<http://williamkstidham.com/>

Music, too, takes on a new poignancy for the heartbroken. I've heard significance in even the most formulaic of Top 40 hits. It's as though Taylor Swift wrote her songs for me and me alone (that being said, the experience of one 20-something woman is very likely much like another's); the navel-gazing hip-hop star Drake is my Poet Laureate.

I have also taken up volunteering at my local branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the organisation that Schopenhauer praised the establishment of in London in 1841. He was devoted to animals, particularly his pet poodles, and criticised other philosophers' views that they existed purely for the satisfaction of humans. I myself find pleasure in the companionship of the dogs I walk for the SPCA, even if I am just borrowing them for half-hours at a time.

But there's a difference between spending time by myself, which I have never had a problem with, and

being alone. Having jumped from long-term relationship to long-term relationship before this most recent ill-fated union, I struggle with the realisation that I am answerable to and responsible for no one but myself; that I am not part of a team, staring down the day together; that, beyond the interest and concern of good friends, I have no one's hopes, dreams, fears and secrets to share in, and no one to share mine.

And the fact that I know such a union exist – that two individuals can combine to form something bigger and better and stronger than themselves – can exist seems to be the difference between Schopenhauer and me. No matter how “#dark” I seem now, I know my disillusionment is only temporary, while he seemed something of a bitter old git – a fact recognised in more politically-correct terms by other outlets' descriptions of him as a “gloomy and thorough-going pessimist”. One of his most oft-repeated pearls of wisdom is that if one ate a toad first thing in the morning, one could be sure of not meeting with anything more repellent in the day ahead. It's hard to fault his logic.

But though I feel, as Schopenhauer did, that “the peace of our mind, which is the most essential element of our happiness besides our health ... can't exist without a significant amount of solitude”, I don't agree that it “will be endangered by any kind of companion.” He believed that he was only himself when he was alone, and the search for love was therefore futile – but just as almost all of my sorrows have sprung out of one failed relationship, perhaps Schopenhauer hadn't found the right person. And, with this thought, I remain a romantic at heart, with one foot out of Nozick's machine.

by ELLE HUNT 2013



Eleanor (or known as Elle) is a reporter for the Dominion Newspaper in Wellington.

by CATHAL HORAN

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND PHILOSOPHY (I)

CATHAL HORAN ANALYSES FREUD THROUGH THE EYES OF HEGEL AND SCHOPENHAUER.

“What are you reading that for?” he asked in an indignant tone.

I put the book down slowly and tried not to look too flustered. I had been caught red-handed. The best line of approach was to tackle the issue head on and not to act embarrassed. I mean, it was nothing to be ashamed of, was it?

I had better explain that the embarrassing material I had been caught with was not pornography – although the shocked tone of my accuser seemed to indicate that it was on a par with such a discovery – but merely Sigmund Freud’s *Civilisation and Its Discontents*; and my accuser was a fellow student from the philosophy course I was studying at the time.

“What do you mean?” I responded inquisitively.

“Well, I mean, all his theories have been proven false, haven’t they? Being in love with your mother and all that. It’s just ridiculous!”

“Have you read any Freud?” I asked innocently.

“Why would I, when all his theories have been proved wrong!”

Anyone who has ever studied Freud has probably had a similar experience. It seems the popularly-held view is that Freud’s theories are no longer relevant: that they have been disproved and have no basis in common sense.

In one way we can see Freud as being a victim of his own success. His theories have become part of our everyday vocabulary: Freudian slips, resistance, the Oedipus complex. However, this popularity has also resulted in his theories being reduced to sound bites which present Freudian theory as children being in love with their mothers. Undoubtedly, Freud was wrong about many things. Indeed, this is a trait he shares with many other great thinkers. But that should not mean we need to throw the infant out with the bathwater.

Some people consider Freud to be one of the three most important figures in human history, sharing the podium with Copernicus and Darwin. The key to this claim is that all these thinkers shook the foundations of human thought by showing that we are not as important or powerful as we’d like to think. Copernicus did this by showing that we are not at the centre of the universe, but merely on another piece of rock orbiting the sun. Darwin did it by showing that we are not even a uniquely-ordained species on our little rock, but simply one that evolved through a series of accidents, like the rest. And Freud did it by showing that we are not even in conscious rational control of our own destinies, instead being driven by unconscious forces which we do not control. So at the very least we should look at Freud’s bathwater before we throw it out.

One of the difficulties in appreciating Freud is that his pseudo-scientific language does not easily relate to our experience. This is not difficult to apprehend when we read Freud’s description of romantic feelings: “The word ‘love’ then shifts more into the sphere of the ego’s pure relation of pleasure to the object, finally affixing itself to sexual objects in the narrower sense, as well as to those objects satisfying the needs of sublimated sexual drives.” I can’t see that selling too many Mills & Boon novels!

However, it may be possible to gain a better understanding of Freud if we look at his theories from a philosophical perspective. If we do this, we can see that Freud’s theories are not that controversial, revolutionary, or indeed, original. We can see Freud’s project as an attempt to answer one of the classic philosophical questions: what is the relationship between the self and the world? Two philosophers who have attempted to answer this question are Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Arthur Schopenhauer. By looking at their philosophies we can see that two of Freud’s central concepts, the Oedipus complex and the unconscious, are attempts to answer this fundamental question. Also, we can see that through their respective philosophies they both touched upon issues which Freud would later develop in relation to psychoanalysis.

ABSOLUTELY HEGEL

Hegel’s philosophy is itself famously difficult to understand, so it may seem odd to try and elucidate Freud with reference to such a dense and complex thinker. However, we’re not exploring the depths of Hegel’s theory, but only its similarity to some of Freud’s thought. For this purpose we only need to be familiar with the basic structure of Hegel’s thought.

Hegel’s goal is to show that there is such a thing as absolute knowledge. By this he means knowledge in which there is no difference between thought and experience. Hegel isn’t advocating here an extreme form of idealism in which the world only exists in our mind. Instead he claims in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that for absolute knowledge “consciousness must know the object as itself.” Unfortunately, Hegel is not explicit about what exactly constitutes absolute knowledge. Instead, in a roundabout way, he attempts to show the limitations of other forms of knowledge, and thus why we must accept absolute knowledge as the only viable goal.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel tries to show that progress to this state of knowledge is the only true way to understand how the self relates to the world. He claims that we engage in a ‘dialectical’ process where first we seek knowledge in the world of external objects. Here we see ourselves as being separate from the world: self and world are two separate entities. But through the dialectical process we encounter a “negation [a negation turns the previous situation on its head]... through which progress through the complete series of forms comes about of itself.” According to Hegel, this series of forms shows the different ways in which we try and overcome the self/world distinction. Hegel believes we will eventually transition from consciousness to self-consciousness when we realise that by seeking knowledge in external objects separate from consciousness we detach ourselves from the world. As a result of being detached and isolated from the world, we deprive ourselves of the full richness of human experience. Hegel believes that self-consciousness is closer to absolute knowing, since being self-consciousness means being conscious of ourselves as well as being conscious of the objects around us.

Earlier forms of consciousness put much more emphasis on the external world in the search for knowledge. Self-consciousness shifts the emphasis onto the subject. Hegel claims that this shift changes the way we interact

with the world by introducing the element of desire; or as Hegel says, “self-consciousness is Desire.” He believes that it introduces desire because self-consciousness wants to limit threats to its new-found independence from the external world. Whereas previously the self was dependant on the world for knowledge, it now has both forms of knowledge under the one skull, and this introduces a new richness and vitality to our experience. We do not want to give this up. To prevent this from happening we have a desire to remove or destroy any evidence of the external world. Hegel puts this strongly when he claims that self-consciousness is “certain of itself only by superseding this other that presents itself to self-consciousness as an independent life.” The final phase in the attainment of knowledge and full being is when we collapse the difference between these two elements of consciousness. Thus, the ultimate desire, the ultimate satisfaction, is when we not merely destroy another object, but when we assimilate these objects into our own world (especially other objects which have self-consciousness): “self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.”

DID SOMEONE MENTION FREUD?

What has this all got to do with Freud? The link is in how young children relate to the world. The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) pioneered experimental studies of child development. According to him, children up to the age of two don’t distinguish the external world from their experiences – and consequently they cannot understand how other people might see the world differently. If we think about how Hegel described absolute knowledge as thought being identical with being, then it appears we experience absolute knowledge as infants. If we cannot tell where our thoughts end and the world begins, then, in a way, thought and being are the same to us. But this is a reversal of the Hegelian dialectic. We do not start out with sense-certainty, seeking knowledge in the external world. Instead, we start out assuming that (what adults call) external objects and the external world are all contained within our own mind. Freud describes this sense of ‘absolute knowledge’ when he claims that “the new-born baby does not at first separate his ego from an outside world that is the source of the feelings flowing towards him.” This for Freud is the ‘oceanic’ feeling many people associate with religious experience.

This means we can claim a link between Freud's idea of early childhood experience and Hegel's concept of absolute knowledge. Moreover, Hegel claimed that the main element of the shift towards absolute knowledge, initially involving the transition to self-consciousness, is that it introduces the element of desire. Freud similarly claims that in early childhood we go through the Oedipus complex, in which we desire or want to possess the objects in our world of experience. The main object in our early world, according to Freud, is our mother. Here, understanding the language we use is important in helping us understand Freud. When Freud claims that young children desire their mothers or want to sexually possess them he is using the term 'sexual' in the broadest descriptive sense, to represent the total psychological energy a child possesses. We usually mean 'sexual' in a narrower, romantic sense.

Hegel claims that when we reach a level of understanding approaching absolute knowledge, our experiences intensify and there is a new richness to the world. Similarly, in the early childhood psychological state, every emotion is heightened. We see ample evidence of this when we see a child go from glowing happiness to howling despair in a second. Every emotion is total as there is no compartmentalisation of any experience. We begin to differentiate between reality and imagination as we begin to separate out experiences. We can conceive of our psychological development here as a dilution of emotional intensity in proportion to our distinction of objects we experience in the external world. However, these diluted experiences sprang forth from an initially concentrated experience, an experience in which Freud feels we cannot identify explicit sexual impulses: "what we ultimately conclude regarding the differentiation of psychic energies is that initially ... they remain clustered together, and hence undifferentiable in terms of our crude analysis, and that only the superintention of object-cathexis makes it possible to differentiate sexual energy, the libido, from the energy of the ego drives." (from *On Narcissism*, 1914).

WILLINGLY SCHOPENHAUER

So Hegel's philosophical project can be seen to foreshadow Freud's psychoanalytic theory concerning infantile sexuality. At the very least there are similarities between their theories which may show Freud's ideas on the topic in a less offputting and more plausible light. Unfortunately, Hegel's philosophy doesn't help us to understand Freud's other ground-breaking concept, the theory of the unconscious.

As hinted, Freud's theory of the unconscious is controversial because it seems to undercut any assumption that we are in control of our own desires and choices and therefore free. In his book *An Existential Critique of Freud*, Gerald Izenberg claims that "in demonstrating that the ego was not master in its own house, psychoanalysis seemed to have struck the ultimate blow against rational optimism about the prospect of human freedom." However, was Freud the first person to strike this blow?

Arthur Schopenhauer believed that the answer to the self/world question is much simpler than Hegel's complex phenomenology suggests. The world, he says, is given to us as a representation: our experience of the world is a representation of the world in our minds. Schopenhauer believes that most people will reject this view, and will simply point to external objects as evidence that the world is more than a representation. But he emphasises that this is not logical, since it presupposes what it intends to prove: you have to assume that you already know where the subjective world stops and the objective begins to be able to point to some external object.

One object, however, appears to us differently. That object is our body, which is given to us in two ways. Firstly, as an object in our representation, and as such it is subject to the laws of nature. Secondly, our interaction with the body appears "as what is known immediately to everyone, and is denoted by the word will." According to Schopenhauer, the world we sense is only a representation of objects, but we have access to the inner workings, the will, of one of these objects, through the direct experience we have of our own ability to will our bodies into action. For Schopenhauer, our direct experience of willing is a direct experience of the hidden inner nature of the world. This enables us to understand the will as not merely another representation.

What can we know about the will? We cannot gain knowledge of the will simply by reference to our actions, as these are only the representations, the outward appearance of things. Schopenhauer stresses that since the will is not in space and time, it unfortunately cannot ever be fully understood. We can know it directly when we make choices, as that force which is at the centre of human striving, and also in its emotional resonances. Schopenhauer also describes pain as occurring when something is "contrary to the will, and gratification or pleasure when in accordance with the will." In this sense Schopenhauer believes that every action must be striving towards some end, whether these ends are sought consciously or, as Schopenhauer says, 'blindly'. So every action is a manifestation of our will, but that does not mean we are aware of our willing in every action.

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S NOT WILL

When Schopenhauer talks about the will, in some ways he could well be talking about Freud's theory of the unconscious. Like Schopenhauer, Freud talks about our inner thoughts and hidden motivations. Freud, however, is more optimistic than Schopenhauer (although that would not be hard) about the prospect of obtaining knowledge of our inner processes, "inner objects being less unknowable than the outside world." This doesn't mean Freud thinks we can know the unconscious directly. The unconscious is governed by what he calls the primary processes of displacement and condensation. Displacement is where our mental energy, or libido, is transferred from one idea to another, with the new idea becoming a substitute for the former. Condensation is where two or more images are bound together and end up with one image or symbol standing for them all. Thus the meaning or emotion we associate with one thing may also be linked to something else.

These primary processes are different from the secondary processes at work in consciousness. The secondary processes that are active during waking life include causality, space, time, morality and linearity. Our conscious ideas do not tend to become fused together or displaced as easily as in our unconscious. The full extent of the primary processes only becomes evident during dreaming, according to Freud. It is here that we can see how an image such as a house could stand for many things, such as our body, our mind, and our emotions, or as a symbol of security or solidity, or even just a house!

The primary/secondary split echoes Schopenhauer's philosophy in two ways. Firstly, Schopenhauer claims that the will does not exist in space, time or causality. But neither does the unconscious pay attention to space, time or causality. Secondly, Schopenhauer states that the will does not fall under the four principles



of sufficient reason which apply to objects in our representation. These principles of logical, empirical, transcendental and meta-logical reasoning echo Freud's secondary processes which create the conditions for coherent conscious experience. So both the will and the unconscious are not subject to the laws of conscious perception/subjective representation.

However, it is not just these aspects of the unconscious and the will that are related. They share a similar nature also. For Freud the unconscious is the source of all our striving and activity. All of our energy for life is plumbed from the unconscious, where it resides in the form of drives. Problems arise when some of these drives are frustrated or repressed because they are unacceptable to the conscious image we have of ourselves. If you remember, Schopenhauer also talks about the will as motivating all activity, and every action being the manifestation of that will. He also described pain as being evidence of the frustration of the main pleasure-seeking goal of the will. This is similar to the frustration the unconscious experiences when its drives are repressed. (In his earlier theory Freud described the unconscious as only being concerned with pleasure seeking, but he later reformulated this theory to include what he called a death drive. However, this is contentious.)

Finally, both Freud and Schopenhauer view the attempt to understand the unconscious and the will respectively as being the most important endeavour we can embark upon. Schopenhauer believes that by understanding the will we turn what is dull and meaningless into a vivid and purposeful world. Freud believes that by gaining a better understanding of the forces at work in our unconscious we can prevent a build-up of repressed libido which will eventually otherwise find an outlet in either neurosis or psychosis – or as Freud claimed, by attempting to realise the unconscious, we can make ourselves healthy enough to be unhappy!

EVALUATING FREUD

What have we achieved by this philosophical look at Freud's bathwater? Do Freud's concepts help us to better understand our relationship with the world around us?

We have achieved two things. Firstly, we have given Freud a philosophical foundation from which he can be judged. One example of the benefit provided by this critical foundation is in relation to the Oedipus complex. Previously there was a danger of simply rejecting it because it did not make sexual, romantic or even practical

sense. But now we can ask instead, does it make sense as an explanation of how children relate to the world? To some it will, to others it will not; but at least these critical evaluations can be addressed from the same intellectual plane. The second thing we have achieved is that we have provided a useful language for our critical evaluations. We can talk about the Oedipus complex in terms of desire, and claim that Hegel's description is a more accurate depiction of the desire we experience as children, for example. Or we might say that Schopenhauer provides a better perspective for understanding unconscious drives than Freud's dream interpretation.

So the next time someone asks you why you're reading Freud, you can say for the same reason someone reads Hegel or Schopenhauer: simply to understand how we relate to the world around us.

by CATHAL HORAN 2008

Cathal Horan is studying for an MPhil in Psychoanalytic Studies at the Philosophy Department of Trinity College, Dublin, while working as a software engineer.

ON THE FOUR FOLD ROOT OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON—ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN 1813

The purpose of this short essay is to explain some of the points contained in Schopenhauer's book; The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. One of the book's assumptions is that the universe is an understandable place, conforming to deterministic laws and exhibiting predictable patterns and regularities. A more recent proposition of this theory is referred to as;

The Fine-Tuned Universe

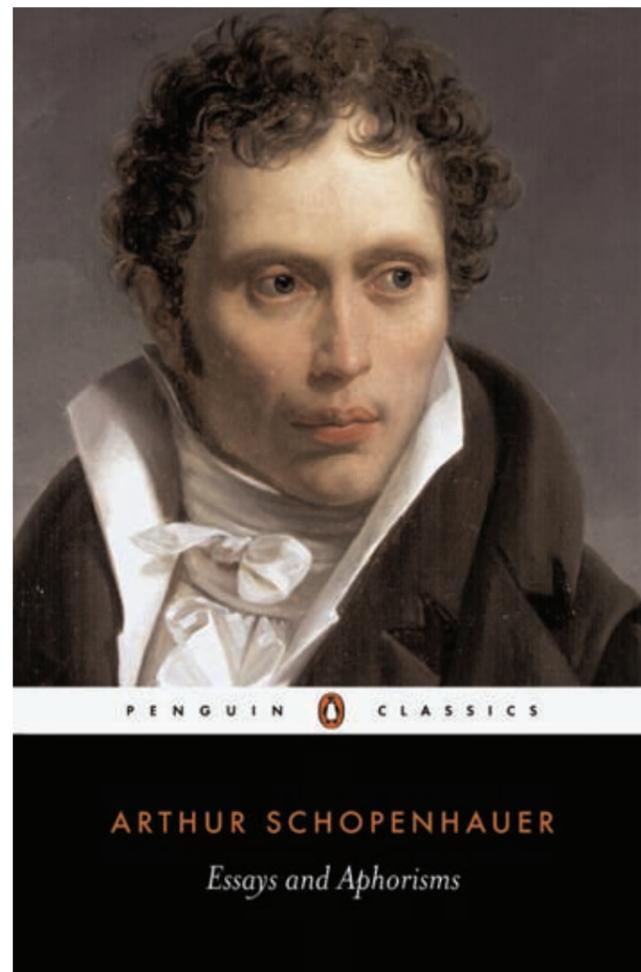
which explains that Fine-tuning refers to the surprising precision of nature's physical constants. To explain the present state of the universe, even the best scientific theories require that the physical constants of nature and the beginning state of the Universe have extremely precise values.

Schopenhauer said that nothing is without a reason for its being and/or that there is always something else to which its existence can be understood and thereby explained. This led to the paradoxical conclusion that

'nothing ever comes into being or ceases to be.'

Causes and effects are always changes in what already exists. Hence the coming into being of a new thing is really nothing but change in what already existed,

Schopenhauer describes the Law of Causality as stipulating that for every 'change' that occurs in the phenomenal world there must have been some preceding event, that caused it to take place.



Time, Space and Causality

We are so constituted that every thing we are aware of in our sense-experience must appear to us in temporal terms, i.e. the linear progression of past, present, and future. Thus the spatio-temporal features of the world are of a subjective origin: to use an analogy it is as if we were born with an irremovable pair of spectacles

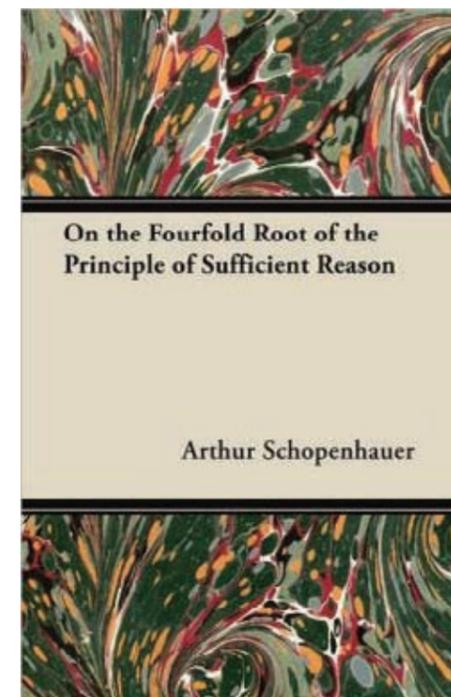
upon our noses, through which every thing is seen as being ordered and arranged in a particular way.

Schopenhauer explains that each temporal instant is dependent upon its predecessor, and is in a sense implied by it—only in so far as one instant has elapsed can another come into being; in this manner succession is held to constitute the essence of time. Likewise position is central to the idea of space; to speak of the position of any thing is to indicate the relations in which it stands to other things similarly locatable in space.

Schopenhauer divides the subjects of causality into four categories (fourfold Root)

- * Causal reasons for empirical objects
- * Logical (propositional) inferences
- * Geometrical (space and time)
- * Explanations of Actions—Motives

Schopenhauer insists that causes and effects are changes or events not entities or things. The notion of a first cause is absurd, every cause necessarily presupposes a preceding cause and so on infinitely.



Schopenhauer maintains that perception permits an organism to stay alive or is fundamental to its existence by providing the capacity to 'orientate itself and interact with the surrounding environment and to assimilate things which might be useful in providing nourishment.

Schopenhauer believes that every human action is the product of two factors: motive (external object of desire or aversion) and character (the individual will of the actor). An event of being confronted with the motive, properly speaking, is the cause; the character of the actor is the force that reacts to the motive.

Life is inextricably bound up with what it lacks, this means that deficiency and want are a constitutive part of life itself.

According to Schopenhauer, we come to know ourselves just as we come to know everything else. We observe our own behaviour, and after a while we come to know our own tendencies and needs in terms of our self-organisation.

Philosopher, Richard Taylor who wrote an introduction to this early work of Schopenhauer's commented that: "Schopenhauer never abandoned the ideas in this book but simply built upon them, in the very rich and profound philosophy that he devoted the rest of his life to creating. Thus when, late in his life, a new edition of The Fourfold Root was brought out, its author added to it here and there, freely referring to other of his writings that were separated from this one by decades. A reader might therefore easily get the impression that this earliest of Schopenhauer's works was one of his latest. Such consistency and singleness of purpose is not altogether common among philosophers."

References:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctytho/dfwHannanSchop.html>
<http://www.hyperboreans.com/heterodoxia/?p=838>

'On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason' (Published 1813) by Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer by Patrick Gardiner

by ROB MASON

Café Philosophy

 FEATURING

SIGMUND FREUD
ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER



L'Assiette:

A French-Kiwi café, situated at 9 Britomart Place. Featuring a full à la carte breakfast and lunch menu, including French interpretations of Kiwi cafe classics. The perfect place for some early morning philosophizing.

L'ASSIETTE – CAFÉ & BISTRO

9 BRITOMART PLACE
AUCKLAND CITY
NEW ZEALAND

PH: +64 (9) 309 0961

EMAIL: ROMAIN@LASSIETTE.CO.NZ

HOURS

MONDAY - WEDNESDAY: 07:00AM - 04:00PM

THURSDAY - FRIDAY: 07:00AM - LATE

SATURDAY: 08:30AM - LATE

SUNDAY: 08:30AM - 04:00PM

AUCKLAND

ONE 2 ONE CAFE

121 Ponsonby Road

ESQUIRES

Auckland Central Library,
Lorne Street, Auckland

MEZZE BAR

9 Durham Street East

POD ESPRESSO

Auckland University
Student Commons, Lvl 2
(outside), 9 Symond St,
Auckland Central.

RELAX LOUNGE

30-38 Princess Street, Auckland
(Auckland University).

ROASTED ADDICTION

487 New North Road, Kingsland,
Auckland
ph: 815 0913

SLURP CAFE

2 Alfred Street, Auckland CBD
Auckland University

THE COUNTER

AUT Tower

VOLCANIC CAFE

450 Mt Eden Road,
Auckland

WELLINGTON

CAFFE MODE

86A Upland Road,
Kelburn, Wellington
ph: 04 4755500

NOTE

“IN THE LAST ISSUE AN ARTICLE BY BEN G. YACOBI; THE LIMITS OF AUTHENTICITY DID NOT INCLUDE A FOOT NOTE SAYING THE ARTICLE HAD PREVIOUSLY APPEARED IN PHILOSOPHY NOW.”

PLUM CAFE

103 Cuba Street,
Wellington
ph: 04 383 8881

CHRISTCHURCH

ED HOPPER CAFE AND BOOKS

184 Clarence St, Riccarton,
Christchurch

NELSON

MORRISON STREET CAFE

244 Hardy St, Nelson
ph: 03 548 8110

**FIND
YOUR
COPY**