

Café Philosophy

**ARTHUR
SCHOPENHAUER**



BIRDS AND BEES

by Tom Mcguire

It underlies the world's oldest profession, it can sell anything, and each one of us is here on earth because of it. Undeniably, sex is one of the most powerful and pervasive elements of human life.

Perhaps because it can so easily become compulsive, human societies seek to regulate sexual expression. Religion has a lot to say about sex, and in many cases use it as the basis for generating negative emotions and perceptions. Western society at least since the 1960's has gone for sexual de-regulation, with hedonistic values becoming more accepted.

There are many religious ideas that link pleasure with punishment and that pathologise natural instincts, leading to unnecessary feelings of guilt and shame. Once an aspect of the psyche is identified as 'bad' or 'sinful', its very presence leads to distress and harsh self-criticism. Hedonism, on the other hand, prioritises pleasure. However, in doing so it can neglect other goods important to wellbeing such as affection, love, and the value of deeply committed relationships over fleeting and superficial encounters. Monogamy, marriage and celibacy represent different social attempts to regulate sex drive in the pursuit of other goods.

The thought that human beings are driven primarily by their most basic and instinctive drives, which both Schopenhauer and Freud argued, is troubling in many ways. It means that we are not as free as we might like to think we are. If a requirement of human autonomy is to freely act then our autonomy could be invalid to the extent that unconscious forces of nature dominate our actions. This is especially true if any action, including sexual behaviour, becomes addictive or compulsive.

Many philosophers, going back at least to Plato, have associated greater intellectual and spiritual freedom with the ability to control desires related to the bodily senses. Just as a rider uses reins to move a horse towards a goal, so we are said to be free when the actions selected by the rational 'me' are the ones which take place.

In fact, since sex requires an expenditure of energy it will often be rational to curtail its expression in order to focus on other goals. The athlete who is getting ready for the big game and the artist who wants a period of uninterrupted focus on their creative work can both attest to this. An ancient practice found among the yogis

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of India called brahmacharya involves channelling the reproductive force towards the development of enhanced consciousness.

Are we in control of our instinctive drives or do they control us? Both Schopenhauer and Freud, as you will see in this issue, seemed to regard sex as something which has an overwhelming grip on the intellect. The unconscious influences our waking thoughts. For Schopenhauer the entire universe is pervaded by an urge that can never be satisfied, that he calls 'will'. The mind has come about only as an appendage to support the will in its strivings. Freud followed a similar line, though he focused mainly on the psychological states of human beings and devised his own way of classifying the forces that influence our motivations.

Keeping things the same

This September both the Scots and Kiwis were faced with opportunities for major change, and opted for the status quo .

The Scots were asked by way of referendum, "should Scotland be an independent country?" "No", they answered. In some respects the question was a moot point. The country of Scotland now enjoys a position within the United Kingdom that stops short of sovereignty but allows for considerable independence. If a majority had answered "yes" then they would be leaving one union for another, for the hope of the Scottish Government was to secede from the UK only to join the EU which is slowly becoming more or less a United States of Europe. It is likely that many voters were swayed by Prime Minister Cameron's offer of increased autonomy. But many Britons feel that this offer was too generous, and now there is increased talk of moving to a federal model in which all parts of the union (including England) enjoy a similar degree of independence.

New Zealanders also chose to keep things the way they are by re-electing the conservative National Party to its third term in Government with an increased percentage of votes. National, under its charismatic leader John Key, has been tremendously successful in building a viable campaign brand which appeals to a wide swathe of the population across class and ethnic

divides, and which seems to increase in popularity the longer they govern. The opposition is divided into competing factions and was unable to convince the electorate that they were fit to rule. Televised claims by NSA whistle-blower Edward Snowden about Government domestic spying were denied by Key who said that although he secretly discussed with his intelligence officials a proposal for mass surveillance, it never materialised. With little evidence available in the public domain, the discussion about spying proved to be a sideshow that failed to elicit a mood for change.

SCHOPENHAUER AND FREUD

A close study of Schopenhauer's central work, *The World as Will and Representation*, reveals that a number of Freud's most characteristic doctrines were first articulated by Schopenhauer. A thinker always expresses something of his culture, of course, but the parallels to be found between Freud and Schopenhauer go well beyond cultural influence. Schopenhauer's concept of the will contains the foundations of what in Freud became the concepts of the unconscious and the id. Schopenhauer's writings on madness anticipate Freud's theory of repression and his first theory of the etiology of neurosis. Schopenhauer's work contains aspects of what became the theory of free association. And most importantly, Schopenhauer articulates major parts of the Freudian theory of sexuality. These correspondences raise some interesting questions about Freud's denial that he even read Schopenhauer until late in life.

"For the Zeitgeist of every age is like a sharp east wind which blows through everything, you can find traces of it in all that is done, thought and written, in music and painting, in the flourishing of this or that art: it leaves its mark on everything and everyone." Arthur Schopenhauer

In the nineteenth century, certain general themes occupied much of the German-speaking world, none more so than the will and the unconscious. These themes may well have reached their highest development



Sigmund Freud

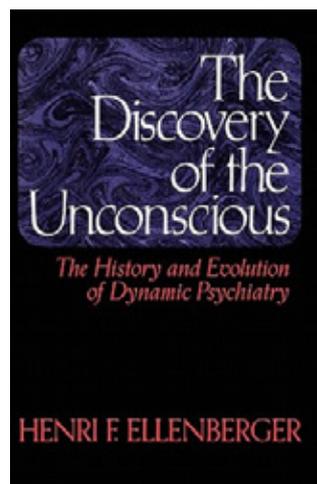
in Freud, as many have suggested, but they did not begin with him, or even with Nietzsche. To find their origins and first clear articulations, we have to go back at least as far as the strange misanthropic philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer. In the latter we find not only an anticipation of some of Freud's most characteristic ideas but a surprisingly complete articulation of them. It is general knowledge, of course, that Schopenhauer anticipated Freud to some extent (we examine some discussions of the link below). Indeed, Freud himself acknowledged this, though with a curious ambivalence to which we will return later. However, the correspondences are far more extensive and far more detailed than is generally known. The reason they are not generally known may be that it takes a thorough and careful reading of Schopenhauer's texts to reveal them, and so far as we can discover, no one has done such a study. We aim to do at least some parts of one in this article.

When we recall that Freud denied that he even read Schopenhauer until "late in life" (1925a, p. 29), such a study takes on added interest (The evidence suggests that he probably had 1915 in mind; he was 59 years old at that time). Freud could easily have acquired the general shape of Schopenhauer's ideas in other ways in his youth, of course -- in Freud's youth, Schopenhauer was the most widely discussed philosopher in the German-speaking world -- but the extent of the correspondences between their views would lead one to wonder. In any case, as we were surprised to discover, writings from long before Freud claims here to have read Schopenhauer contain detailed references to him!

For example, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) refers to a work of his three times. Schopenhauer certainly defined the *Zeitgeist* that, in the words of his own aphorism, blew "like a sharp east wind" through Freud's time, but the evidence suggests that Freud was more directly influenced by him than that -- whatever he said later.

We will limit ourselves to correspondences in psychological doctrine between the two thinkers, though there are other similarities in their views, too, for example in their ethics and aesthetics. We look first at Schopenhauer's concept of the will. Though a metaphysical concept, aspects of it had a profound influence on his psychology. Metaphysical language notwithstanding, Schopenhauer's 'will' is strikingly similar to aspects of Freud's early endogenous stimuli or later id. Moreover, Schopenhauer's doctrine contains a clear anticipation of the primary process, and sexuality is as central as it is in Freud's later doctrine of the id. In addition, Schopenhauer also identified a process that is not only similar to Freud's later concept of repression but is even expressed in similar language, and he attempted to trace the etiology of madness. Though his attempt is flawed, it foreshadows Freud's first theory of neurosis; Schopenhauer also saw madness as far more similar to mental health than was customary at the time. Finally, Schopenhauer's concept of the thread of memory and his notion of association as a means of recovering lost memories and dreams anticipate aspects of Freud's later doctrines. Before we examine these correspondences, let us look briefly at what others have done.

As we said earlier, many writers have noted broad



parallels of outlook between Schopenhauer and Freud, especially in their ethical and aesthetic outlooks. Their common pessimism is a well-known example. Bischler (1939), one of the earliest studies, is typical in this regard -- he restricted his comments to similarities in the two thinkers' pessimism and in their aesthetic and ethical positions. For him the important similarity is

that one finds in both of them "the same sombre realism which traces human spirituality back to the workings of obscure primitive and instinctual forces." (1939, p. 88). However, he largely passes over similarities in their psychology, except for some comments on their theories

of love, where he focuses on the divergences, not the similarities. There are a few studies of the similarities in their psychology specifically. Proctor-Greg (1956) is the only early one. She noted similarities in their treatment of mental illness, though only briefly, and remarked on certain correspondences between features of Schopenhauer's psychology and Freud's topographical model. Like Bischler, she also noted the parallels in aesthetic and ethical outlook.

The first significant study was done by Ellenberger, in his classic 1970 history of dynamic psychology. He remarks on Schopenhauer's psychological doctrines several times, crediting him for example with recognizing parapraxes, and urges that Schopenhauer "was definitely among the ancestors of modern dynamic psychiatry." (1970, p. 205). He also cites with approval Foerster's interesting claim that "no one should deal with psychoanalysis before having thoroughly studied Schopenhauer." (1970, p. 542). In general, he views Schopenhauer as the first and most important of the many nineteenth-century philosophers of the unconscious, and concludes that "there cannot be the slightest doubt that Freud's thought echoes theirs." (1970, p. 542). However, Ellenberger tries to cover the whole nineteenth century, so his treatment of any given thinker is fairly cursory.

Gupta's 1980 essay is also a notable contribution. He claims that "[i]n Schopenhauer's writings are to be found many of the piercing insights which were later developed and elaborated by Freud." (1980, p. 226). On psychological matters, Gupta observes the similarities between the two with respect to Schopenhauer's will and Freud's id (1980, pp. 226-8), and between Schopenhauer's pioneering ideas on sexuality and Freud's later ideas. He also notes that "Schopenhauer comes close to Freud's theory of rationalization" (1980, p. 226), points out that Schopenhauer anticipated the notion of repression, and makes the penetrating observations that "both considered excessive repression damaging to human personality." (1980, p. 231). He further observes that they both held childhood to be central to the formation of later personality (1980, pp. 231-2). Important though these observations are, they by no means exhaust the topic. In addition, Gupta offers little evidence even for the claims he does make.

Remarks on the relationship to Freud have also been made by writers on Schopenhauer. Gardiner (1963) contains brief references to Schopenhauer's description of repression and to the similarities between the will and Freud's unconscious, for example.



Thomas Mann
June 06, 1875 - August 12, 1955

He also touches on the relation of Schopenhauer's doctrine of sexuality to Freud's. Similarly, in a 1989 book on Schopenhauer, Magee notes several similarities between Schopenhauer and Freud, observing that "many of the ideas that constitute the core of Freudianism were set out fully and clearly by Schopenhauer." (1989,

p. 283). He also expresses the opinion that it would have been impossible for Freud to have been as independent of Schopenhauer's influence as he claimed to be, an issue we will examine later.

Finally, Thomas Mann once made some trenchant observations on the subject. In his view, Schopenhauer, as psychologist of the will, is the father of all modern psychology. From him the line runs, by way of the psychological radicalism of Nietzsche, straight to Freud and the men who built up his psychology of the unconscious and applied it to the mental sciences [1968, 408]. Mann observed many points of correspondence between Schopenhauer and Freud, ranging from similarities in their general psychological outlook to similarities between Schopenhauer's will and intellect and Freud's id and ego. Mann made these comments, interestingly enough, in a speech on Freud's eightieth birthday.

One purpose of our paper is to provide some foundation for the kind of claims we have just sketched. We turn now to Schopenhauer's notion of the will. As we will see, his psychology grows directly out of that notion, especially his doctrines that sexuality is pervasive in all human motivation and that intellect is secondary to the will. For Schopenhauer, the will is fundamental. It underlies and animates everything phenomenal -- everything we can observe or what we call the objective world. According to Schopenhauer, we can know something of the will through awareness of our own volition; individual volition is merely a limited manifestation of the same will from which the entire objective world arises. In Schopenhauer's view, the will is endlessly striving and all its teeming manifestations in this world are forever beyond the reach of any satisfaction, the foundation of his pessimism. Setting



AN INTIMATE
SCENE FROM THE
MOVIE "THE WOLF
OF WALL STREET"

aside the broader metaphysical functions Schopenhauer assigns the will, let us examine how he saw it in its manifestations in the volition of individual human beings. Schopenhauer thought that the will itself is unconscious, but that it manifests itself in sexual desire and the 'love of life' in human beings. The latter are both manifestations of an underlying will to live. Freud took over this whole picture of dual instincts rooted in a single will to live and preserved it unchanged until at least 1923. For both of them, the sex drive was by far the stronger of the two, "the most perfect manifestation of the will to live" (1844, 2, p. 514). (1) Indeed, Schopenhauer went so far as to claim that man is concrete sexual drive; for his origin is an act of copulation, and his desire of desires is an act of copulation, and this impulse alone perpetuates and holds together his whole phenomenal existence [1844, 2, 514].

Again: "The sexual impulse is the most vehement of all craving, the desire of desires, and the concentration of all our willing." (1844, 2, p. 514). Like many of his ideas, Schopenhauer's insights on

the power of sexual desire are expressed in metaphysical language. In fact, he viewed his claims about sexuality as simple inferences from the metaphysical construct of the will. When the will manifests itself in the form of a living creature, it aims to perpetuate itself according to the reproductive means of the creature. Thus sex is basic to the will perpetuating itself. It is "the most complete manifestation of the will-to-live, its most distinctly expressed type." (1844, 2, p. 514). For Schopenhauer, we know sex to be the "decided and strongest affirmation of life by the fact that for man in the natural state, as for the animal, it is his life's final end and highest goal," (1819, 1, p. 329). Because the sexual drive is the strongest affirmation of life and the most complete manifestation of the will-to-live, Schopenhauer refers to the genitals as "the real focus of the will" (1844, 2, p. 514), that is, the clearest physical manifestation that the will manages to achieve in the physical world. The sexual drive "springs from the depths of our nature." (1844, 2, p. 511).

These doctrines anticipate Freud's ideas

on sexuality in a most striking way. Like Freud's theory, they emphasize the importance and the universality of the sexual drive; for Schopenhauer, sexuality is a part and the most powerful part of virtually all human motivation, and his illustrations of the manifestations of this drive read like a summary of Freud's theory. Indeed, Schopenhauer even expanded the domain of sexuality before Freud, stretching it far beyond procreation and even beyond orgasm and genital pleasure. Indeed, they both come close to using the term to describe virtually all pleasure-seeking of any sort, though Freud went further than Schopenhauer, as we will see.

Schopenhauer found manifestations of the sexual impulse where they had never before been thought to exist. Consider this remarkable passage:

To all this corresponds the important role which the sex-relation plays in the world of mankind, where it is really the invisible central point of all action and conduct, and peeps up everywhere in spite of all the veils thrown over it. It is the cause of war and the aim and object of peace, the basis of the serious and the aim of the joke, the inexhaustible source of wit, the key to all allusions, and the meaning of all mysterious hints, of all unspoken offers and all stolen glances; it is the daily meditation of the young and often the old as well, the hourly thought of the unchaste, and even against their will the constantly recurring imagination of the chaste, the ever ready material for a joke, just because the profoundest seriousness lies at its root. (1844, 2, p. 513, translation slightly modified).

This passage is not unique.

Here is another.

Next to the love of life, [sexual love] shows itself ... as the strongest and most active of all motives, and incessantly lays claim to half the powers and thoughts of the younger portion of mankind. It is the ultimate goal of almost all human effort; it has an unfavourable influence on the most important affairs, interrupts every hour the most serious occupations, and sometimes perplexes for a while even the greatest minds. It does not hesitate to intrude with its trash, and to interfere with the negotiations of statesmen and the investigations of the learned. It knows how to slip its love-notes and ringlets even into ministerial portfolios and philosophical manuscripts [1844, 2, 533].

Thus Schopenhauer traces the ubiquitous manifestations of the sexual instinct. Even the most sublime love is essentially sexual: "in every case of being in love, however objective and touched with the sublime that admiration may appear to be, what alone is aimed at is the generation of an individual... ." (1844, 2, p. 535). Similarly, all amorousness is rooted in the sexual impulse alone, is in fact absolutely only a more closely determined, specialized, and indeed, in the strictest sense, individualized sexual impulse, however ethereally it may deport itself [1844, 2, 533].

The above passages are so completely in line with psychoanalysis that it is difficult to believe that their author was dead by the time Freud started school! Indeed, without the clinical and theoretical backing that Freud first provided many decades later, they must have seemed quite incredible to most readers.

As we just said, like Freud later, Schopenhauer covered a much broader range of phenomena by the term 'sexuality' and its cognates than the term covers in ordinary discourse. In drastically broadening range of motive and activity called 'sexual', motive and activity where nothing sexual in the ordinary sense could be found, Schopenhauer at least kept some link to the orgasmic, the genital -- to sexuality in its common sense. If the will is the ground of everything, including all instincts and therefore something much broader than normal sexuality, at least its manifestations are sexual in the ordinary sense. Freud went much further; he not only expanded the range of the sexual, he expanded the concept itself, calling many things sexual that have no obvious link to orgasmic or genital pleasure at all. As he admitted: "psychoanalysis is commonly reproached with having extended the concept of what is sexual far beyond its usual range. The fact is undisputed;" (1910b, p. 222).

In fact, Freud's expansion of the concept of sexuality is altogether more complicated than Schopenhauer's. A number of ideas from a number of different sources contended for control of Freud's use of the term 'sexuality'. As a result, he used the term 'sexuality' at least three different and incompatible ways. Sometimes by 'sexuality' he meant the ordinary notion, to do with genital pleasure and orgasm, activities related to genital pleasure, and the alternatives to or alternative avenues to genital pleasure. This is the narrowest of his three usages and is the notion of sexuality at work when he speaks, for example, of the loss of the sensual interests that castration induces as "obliterating the sexual characters" entirely (1920, p. 214). However, he also used



the term in two very different extended ways. In one, he treated all sensual pleasures as sexual because of their link to genital and/or orgasmic pleasure (1916-1917, pp. 323-5), even the “affectionate current” of tenderness in us (1925a, p. 38), viewing the latter as the residue of infantile sexual pleasure (1905, p. 200)). Here he explicitly divorces the sexual from the genital, or greatly loosens the links between them (1905, p. 180; see 1913, p. 323; 1925a, p. 38). In this sense of ‘sexual’, there are many sexual pleasures that castration would not remove, so many that Freud could be puzzled about how to tie them all together (1905, p. 233). In the broadest of his three usages, the term ‘sexual’ refers to what Plato calls Eros: all the forces that seek life, build structure, and synthesize psychic material.

These competing conceptions confront one another in the last paragraph of the well-known 1920 Preface to the fourth edition of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905). Here Freud also links his view(s) to Schopenhauer: some of what this book contains -- its insistence on the importance of sexuality in all human achievements and the attempt that it makes at enlarging the concept of sexuality -- has from the first provided the strongest motives for the resistance against psychoanalysis. ... We might be astonished at this; ... For it is some time since Arthur Schopenhauer ... showed mankind the extent to which their activities are determined by sexual impulses -- in the ordinary

sense of the word. ... And as for the ‘stretching’ of the concept of sexuality ..., anyone who looks down with contempt upon psychoanalysis from a superior vantage-point should remember how closely the enlarged sexuality of psychoanalysis coincides with the Eros of the divine Plato [1905, p. 134; ‘divine Plato’ was Schopenhauer’s way of referring to Plato, too (1844, 1, p. xv.)].

Strangely enough, no concept of sexuality anything like as enlarged as this, is to be found anywhere in the *Three Essays* themselves. There is a great deal more to be said about Freud’s conception or conceptions of sexuality, of course, but even our cursory examination is enough to show that Schopenhauer anticipated Freud’s ideas on the topic in some interesting ways. Schopenhauer’s claims about the ubiquity of sexuality in human affairs are particularly striking.

On how people cope with the dominating force of sexual desire, Schopenhauer again anticipated Freud. His account of how far human beings will go to deny the power of sexuality is every bit as acerbic as Freud’s:

This ... is the piquant element and the jest of the world, that the chief concern of all men is pursued secretly and ostensibly ignored as much as possible. But, in fact, at every moment we see it seat itself as the real and hereditary lord of the world, out of the fullness of its own strength, on the ancestral throne, and looking



reasonableness” which we find in children (1844, 2, p. 395). In response, we might try to say that the sensual zones and pleasures of Freud’s theory of infantile sexuality are sexual only in the extended sense of the term we delineated earlier. Freud no more believed that infantile sexuality is aimed at orgasmic release or that it is genital than anyone else -- indeed, his stages of psychosexual development were specifically built on a denial of the latter point. If so, it may sometimes appear as if his infantile ‘sexuality’ comes down to little more than ‘organ-pleasure’, bodily sensuality in general (see in this regard the argumentative discussion at 1916-1917, pp. 323-5). Such a minimalist readings would seriously understate the originality of his theory, however; for Freud, the infantile part-instincts and erogenous zones are sexual in a much stronger sense than that -- they are the origins of genital sexuality in the human organism. (2)

In light of this disagreement about infantile sexuality, it is interesting that the two of them did agree on the central importance of childhood to adult life. As Freud

down from thence with scornful glances, laugh at the preparations which have been made to subdue it, to imprison it, or at least to limit it and if possible to keep it concealed, or indeed so to master it that it shall only appear as a subordinate, secondary concern of life [1844, 2, p. 513].

The two agree on another point, too. Like Freud, Schopenhauer treated sexuality from two very different perspectives: the individual, and the species. As he wrote, “It is true that the will-to-live manifests itself primarily as an effort to maintain the individual; yet this is only a stage towards the effort to maintain the species.” (1844, 2, p. 514). In Freud the same dual perspective takes this form:

On the one view, the individual is the principal thing, sexuality is one of its activities and sexual satisfaction is one of its needs; while on the other view, the individual is a temporary and transient appendage to the quasi-immortal germ-plasm, which is entrusted to him by the process of generation [1915a, p. 125].

Though the two thinkers agree on many things with respect to sexuality, they do not agree on everything. In particular, Schopenhauer did not think that there is any such thing as infantile sexuality. In fact, he attributes the happiness of youth to the fact that the sexual impulse, so “pregnant with evil, is lacking in the child ...; from this arises the character of innocence, intelligence, and



put the point, “the child is psychologically father to the adult and ... the events of his first years are of paramount importance for his whole later life.” (1940a, p. 187). There are few ideas for which Freud is better known. It is not

well-known that Schopenhauer held the same view:

the experiences and acquaintances of childhood and early youth become thereafter the types and rubrics of all later knowledge and experience, ... Thus the firm foundation of our world view is formed even in the years of childhood, together with its shallowness or depth: it is later carried out and completed; yet not essentially altered

[quoted in McGill, 1971(3)].

Schopenhauer parallels Freud on some more theoretical issues, too. They both display the same unsettledness about whether he had one fundamental kind of motivator or two, an unease that came to a head in Freud in 1920. Schopenhauer often distinguished the sexual drive from “the love of life” as two drives (“Next to the love of life”, he says, sexual love is “the strongest and most active of all motives ...” (1844, 2, p. 533, our emphasis). But he also he often ran them together in an undifferentiated notion of the will. Again like Freud, he saw them even when separated as manifestations of will, as Freud always saw both libido and the self-preservative drive as discharge of endogenous stimuli or avoidance of excessive exogenous stimuli. Strangely enough, the only parallel that Freud ever acknowledged between himself and Schopenhauer on the drives concerned not his pre-1920 theory of libido and self-preservation as separate drives but his post-1920 theory which merged the two under the concept of Eros and contrasted both with the newly-introduced death drive, the theory of Beyond the Pleasure Principle. Indeed, Freud links both parts of the new doctrine to Schopenhauer there. He treats sexual drives as fundamental to eros (“... the true life instincts” (1920, p. 40)), and then linked this expanded concept to Schopenhauer (1920 Preface to the Three Essays, quoted above). Similarly, when he introduces his controversial death drive later in (1920), he tells us that: ‘we have unwittingly steered our course into the harbour of Schopenhauer’s philosophy.’ For him death is the ‘true result and to that extent the purpose of life’, while the sexual instinct is the embodiment of the will to live. [1920, p. 50]

First, Schopenhauer never married sexuality and the urge to self-preservation in the way Freud is now doing. Secondly, he never postulated a positive drive to die. It was bad enough for him that death was the inevitable result of living; he did not think anything actually sought it. In short, Freud first acknowledged the parallels between his drive theory and Schopenhauer’s only at the point at which they largely ceased to exist!

Turn now to the relation of the will to the intellect. According to Schopenhauer, the will must objectify itself in the world to satisfy its strivings. To do so, it creates for itself an intellect appropriate to its needs. Thus, he holds that the intellect is secondary to the will, and subordinate to its demands. Being the basis of the intellect, the will rules it, guides it, incites it to further effort, in short imparts to it the activity that is not originally inherent in it.” (1844, 2, p. 213, see p. 224). This led Schopenhauer to the idea that the intellect was not as rational as had been previously supposed; the will dictates, unseen, what the mind desires, believes and thinks. Our states of consciousness and our decisions had previously been thought to be the outcome of processes of reasoning. Schopenhauer argues that these states have their origin in the will. We can almost hear Freud: “the ego is in the habit of transforming the id’s will into action as if it were its own.” (1923, p. 25). Schopenhauer was not the first to part-company with the enlightenment in this way; recall Hume’s famous dictum that “reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions.” However, Schopenhauer gave the will far greater prominence than any previous thinker. In particular, he built his whole model of the psyche upon it. Freud, of course, shared Schopenhauer’s view that the ‘intellect is entirely secondary’ to the functioning of the mind -- “the ego is not master in its own house,” (1917, p. 143, italics in original). Further, they both saw that the intellect promptly takes the demands of the will as its own. Schopenhauer was even aware of the phenomenon of rationalization. He did not explicitly formulate the concept, but it is integral to his view that the intellect takes what is really the will’s motive as its own and justifies it as though its own processes of decision-making were the author of them.

Schopenhauer’s theory of the primacy of the will even contains an anticipation of Freud’s notion that infants begin life totally isolated, discharging energy blindly by a wild primary process.

The new-born child moves violently, screams and cries; it wills most vehemently, although it does not yet know what it wills. For the medium of motives, the intellect is still undeveloped. The will is in the dark concerning the external world in which its objects lie; and it rages like a prisoner against the walls and bars of his dungeon. Light, however, gradually comes; at once the fundamental traits of universal human willing, and at the same time their individual modification that is here to be found, show themselves [1844, 2, pp. 234-235].

Compare Freud: The infant betrays its un-pleasure, when there is an increase of stimulus and an absence of

satisfaction, by the motor discharge of screaming and beating about with its arms and legs [1911, p. 220n.].

Freud thinks the infant then hallucinates some situation of satisfaction. When the expected satisfaction does not occur, “the psychic apparatus had to decide to form a conception of the real circumstances in the external world and to endeavour to make a real alteration in them.” (1911, p. 220). The reality principle, the secondary process, and the ego are born.

This too is in line with Schopenhauer. For him, the will creates the intellect, which “is designed merely to prescribe to the individual will its motivations, i.e. to indicate to it the objectives of its desires together with the means of taking possession of them” (1970, p. 59). Again compare Freud:

We are bound to suppose that a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist ... from the start; the ego has to be developed. The auto-erotic instincts, however, are there from the very first; so there must be something added to auto-eroticism ... in order to bring about narcissism [1914b, p. 76]. ... We may well ... conclude that instincts and not external stimuli are the true motive forces behind the advances that have led the nervous system, with its unlimited capacities, to its present high level of development [1915a, p. 120].

For Freud, motor discharge is in the service of an (un)-pleasure principle (1895) and he eventually developed a sophisticated account in which discharges are not outwards but at the self, an activity he called auto-eroticism and needed in order to make room for the idea of primary narcissism (1914b, p. 88). So his account goes far beyond anything Schopenhauer wrote. Nevertheless, the two views start from the same picture.

Freud adhered to this picture in one form or another throughout his life, from the Project for a Scientific Psychology of 1895 and Chapter VII of the Interpretation of Dreams of 1900 (pp. 565ff, 598ff.) at least to Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920, pp. 10ff.) and even later, with appropriate modifications to accommodate the introduction of the death instinct. As we have seen, the parallels with Schopenhauer are close. They even agree that the “afflux of stimulation” that gets mental life going is “incessant and unavoidable” (1915a, p. 120), and that this is what makes it so demanding and urgent. Nor can it be quieted by fleeing. The only way to stop it is to find some object that quiets its source, something that creates an ‘experience of satisfaction’, for example food or sexual discharge. Similarly, Schopenhauer’s characterizations of how the will operates even anticipate the notion of primary process.

For what the bridle and the bit are to an unmanageable horse, the intellect is to the will in man; it must be led by this bridle by means of instruction, exhortation, training, and so on; for in itself the will is as wild and impetuous an impulse as is the force appearing in the plunging waterfall; in fact it is, as we know, ultimately identical therewith [1844, 2, p. 213].

In fact, in the 1911 work quoted above, Freud actually cites Schopenhauer, one page before the one from which we just quote. However, the citation is on a different topic. Freud never seems to have acknowledged the parallels that we have just discussed.

These parallels even extend to their respective views of pleasure and the way the will operates. Both saw pleasure as merely negative, a removal of an irritant, a direct consequent of seeing the will or id as endlessly striving. For Schopenhauer, pleasure is the momentary cessation of the will’s striving, for Freud the discharge or at the very least the achievement of constancy in the flow of stimuli from the drives. “Every un-pleasure,” ought “to coincide with a heightening, and every pleasure with a lowering, of mental tension due to stimulus.” (1924, pp. 159-60). Only in 1924 did Freud even partially modify this view. Thus, for the first thirty years of his work on psychology, he adhered to the view of Schopenhauer, whether or not he was aware of it. It being transparently obvious that much pleasure is not like this, they’re both thinking that it is, catches one’s attention.

In one respect, Schopenhauer carried through the implications of the primacy of the will or the id even more consistently than Freud. If Freud was a child of the German romanticism to which Schopenhauer so richly



contributed, he was also a child of nineteenth century scientific empiricism. In line with the later, he believed that the inquiring mind could operate rationally and discover truths about the world. If rationality was threatened by the unconscious, it was a threat that could be overcome, at least in science. However, as French analysts demonstrate, his model of the mind can easily be taken to point in exactly the opposite direction. From

this point of view, when Schopenhauer said that “[e]very passion, in fact every inclination or disinclination, tinges the objects of knowledge with its colour ... most common of occurrence is the falsification of knowledge brought about by desire or hope,” (1844, 2, p. 141), he was perhaps more in tune with this implication of the power of the unconscious than Freud was.

This article was written by Christopher Young & Andrew Brook. It appears in Café Philosophy in two parts. The second part will appear in the next issue of Café Philosophy together with references.

DEFINITION OF THE ID, EGO AND SUPER EGO

The id, ego and super-ego are the three parts of the psychic apparatus defined in Sigmund Freud’s structural model of the psyche; they are the three theoretical constructs in terms of whose activity and interaction our mental life is described. According to this model of the psyche, the id is the set of uncoordinated instinctual trends; the super-ego plays the critical and moralizing role; and the ego is the organized, realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and the super-ego. The super-ego can stop one from doing certain things that one’s id may want to do.

Although the model is structural and makes reference to an apparatus, the id, ego and super-ego are purely symbolic concepts about the mind and do not correspond to actual (somatic) structures of the brain such as the kind dealt with by neuroscience.

The concepts themselves arose at a late stage in the development of Freud’s thought as the “structural model” (which succeeded his “economic model” and “topographical model”) and was first discussed in his 1920 essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and was formalized and elaborated upon three years later in his *The Ego and the Id*. Freud’s proposal was influenced by the ambiguity of the term “unconscious” and its many conflicting uses.

The id (Latin for “it”) is the unorganized part of the personality structure that contains a human’s basic, instinctual drives. The id is the only component of personality that is present from birth.[4] It is the source of our bodily needs, wants, desires, and impulses, particularly our sexual and aggressive drives. The id contains the libido, which is the primary source of instinctual force that is unresponsive to the demands of reality.[5] The id acts according to the “pleasure principle”—the psychic force that motivates the tendency to seek immediate gratification of any impulse[6]—defined as, seeking to avoid pain or unpleasure (not ‘displeasure’) aroused by increases in instinctual tension.[7] If the mind was solely guided by the id, individuals would find it difficult to wait patiently at a restaurant, while feeling hungry, and would most likely grab food from neighbouring tables.[8]

According to Freud the id is unconscious by definition:

“It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality, what little we know of it we have learned from our study of the Dreamwork and of the construction of neurotic symptoms, and most of that is of a negative character and can be described only as a contrast to the ego. We approach the id with analogies: we call it a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations. ... It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle.”[9]

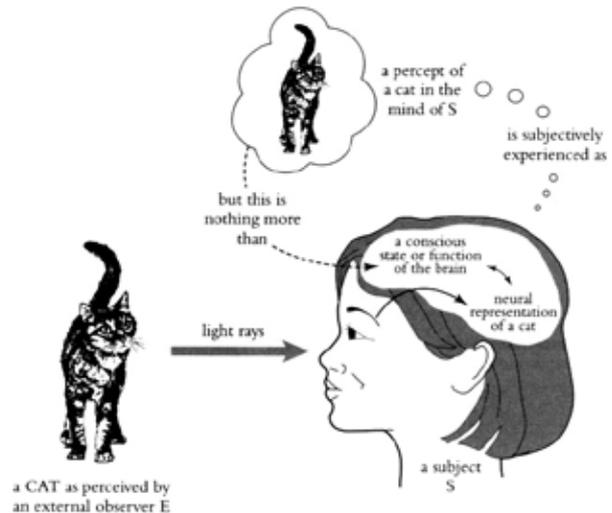
In the id,

“contrary impulses exist side by side, without cancelling each other out. ... There is nothing in the id that could be compared with negation ... nothing in the id which corresponds to the idea of time.”[10]

Developmentally, the id precedes the ego; i.e., the psychic apparatus begins, at birth, as an undifferentiated id, part of which then develops into a structured ego. Thus, the id:

“contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth, is laid down in the constitution—above all, therefore, the instincts, which originate from the somatic organization, and which find a first psychical expression here (in the id) in forms unknown to us.”[11]
Wikipedia: Id, ego and super-ego

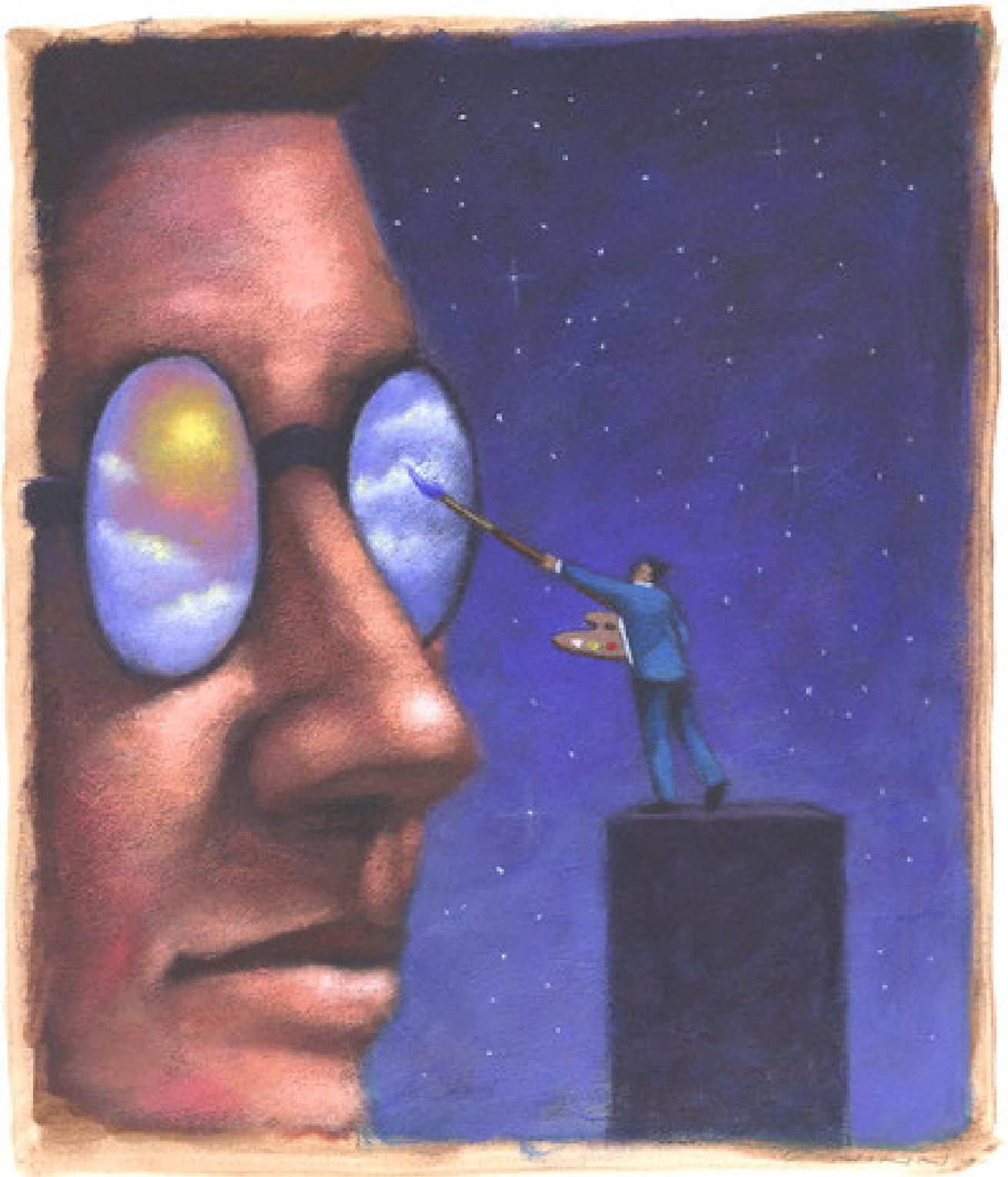
In his Critique of Pure Reason, (1781) Immanuel Kant significantly extended the range of a priori truths (prior to experience). He held that we bring to bear on the world not only our senses, nor only those a priori truths which unfold from definitions. The way in which our minds operate on the world is dictated by the way our minds are constituted, and this constitution is also a priori, that is it does not derive from experience, though, like the unfolding of definitions, it will subsequently be applied to experience. In other words we are born with



a mind that can re-interpret light waves into images and objects. (refer diagram)

Forty years earlier, David Hume had demonstrated that we have no evidence to be certain that there is such a thing as a cause: all we can know is that very often, or even always within our finite experience, A is followed by B. Similarly, he showed that when we talk about space and time we are merely expressing our repeated experiences of physical and temporal distance. He then added that of course we cannot in real life do without the notions of cause, space or time; we constantly show that we have a belief in causes etc., but he insisted that they were only beliefs, and that we have no philosophical reason for knowing that they really existed.

Kant now asked himself why ‘we cannot do without these notions. Hume had suggested it was because they were useful and that without them we just couldn’t live; but he was clear that the entertaining of such notions lacked philosophical rigour and was therefore was a kind of intellectual laziness. Kant was sure that there was a great deal more to it than that. He held that thinking in terms of causes was not a philosophical aberration, but arises out of the very essence of the way the human mind is constituted, the essence of the way it is compelled to reason. When the mind looks at the world, it has no choice but to view it with the ideas that are built into the mind. This looking Kant called: Anschauungen. The German noun means ‘views,’ and the technical translation into English, ‘intuitions,’ does not in its everyday sense capture the meaning at all, although it does come from the Latin; *intueri*, meaning to look upon. Leibniz had called these ideas ‘tools’ of the understanding; Kant called them Concepts and Categories, and they too are a priori: that is to say



WE ARE ALL BORN WITH TRANSCENDENTAL
SPECTACLES WHICH WE NEVER EVER TAKE -
OFF

they come before any experience and they shape the experiences we subsequently have. Therefore we can say that the images we see are formed through a process of synthesis, made possible by the apparatus of our mind.

Both Leibniz and Kant knew that these tools of understanding are not present in a baby, but in their view they are genetically programmed to develop without having to rely on experience. The baby cannot play football because its leg muscles are not developed; but they are programmed to develop naturally as it matures. In the same way, the baby is not aware of tools of understanding, but they are also programmed to develop as the baby matures. Locke had said that the mind at birth is *tabula rasa* – a blank slate – and that there are no innate ideas. Leibniz and Kant differed from him in claiming that such developments are innate and not the result of experience, though experience and training may speed up and refine the development of these tools so that we can use them more effectively. So the world reaches us already mediated through these tools of understanding. And what follows from that is that we can have no direct knowledge of the world as it is before this mediation has happened. The world as it is before mediation is what Kant calls the noumenal world, or in a memorable phrase *Das Ding an sich*, which means: “The thing in itself,” but whose sense would be more accurately caught by translating it as “the thing (or world) as it really is” (as distinct from how it appears to use). He calls the world as it appears to us (after mediation through our tools of understanding) the phenomenal world.

These tools of understanding, which I will be describing below, also have what Kant called a transcendental character. These are ideas which transcend or go beyond any one person’s ideas and are shared by all human beings, not by any one self but by the transcendent self, and are not therefore merely individual constructs. The subjectivism necessarily involved in a situation where the objective nature of the noumenal world must be hidden from us is therefore a collective subjectivism. As such, it presents a kind of objectivity against which the subjectivity of an individual can be assessed. For example, in their developed state these collective views present a system of reasoning in the context of which we can say whether an individual is using reason properly or not. That part of Kant’s teaching which deals with the nature of the ideas which all human beings share is therefore called: Transcendental Idealism

Bertrand Russell explains Kant’s theory with an analogy, which I’m expanding a little here. If all people

were born with blue tinted spectacles that they could never take off, the unphilosophical person would assume that all the colours of the world have a bluish tinge. But philosophers, once they have realised (since we all wear them we might call them transcendental spectacles) are an irremovable part of our visual equipment and will come to understand that we cannot know what the colours of the world are really like because they can only reach us as mediated by our transcendental spectacles. The philosopher will know that he is receiving signals from outside: he will be aware that there is something ‘out there’ which is sending the signals, but he will also know that the signals he is capable of receiving depend on the nature of our receiving apparatus. The apparatus may, by its very nature, distort the signals and indeed miss out a whole range of them. To those signals we cannot receive we are blind, and we can have no conception of them.

But will the philosopher really know that there is something sending the signals? Should Kant not rather have said that he will assume the existence of an external source of the signals? To understand the full significance of what Kant was saying requires us to consider the limitations imposed on us by our sense of reason. Our reason does not read off or deduce from the signals of the noumenal world what the world is like. The way our sense of reasoning interprets those signals constitutes the phenomenal world. This interpretation forms our ‘knowledge,’ and because knowledge is interpretation, it is not so much something we have as something we do. We shape the phenomenal world with our tools of understanding. For example, because we cannot perceive the noumenal world directly, we cannot know whether it has an order or not. Therefore such sense as we have of the universe being orderly is not imposed by the universe on us, but is imposed by us on the universe.

Kant believed that by his insight he had brought about a ‘Copernican Revolution.’ Copernicus had replaced the old idea that the earth was the centre of the universe: the sun was now its centre. This radically shifted the perspective of how we understand the world. Kant created a similar shift of perspective, from the idea that the world as we experience it is something that is given to our minds to the notion that it is determined by our mind. In the 19th century the Germans particularly took to this conception that the world is a product of the mind (and, later of the Will). More soberly, 20th century scientists and philosophers reinforced the notion that we can only understand the world through the conceptual apparatus, the tools of understanding that we have.

It is important to realise that, though the tools of understanding are not adequate to reveal to us the real nature of the 'thing-in-itself,' they are extremely effective in our understanding of the world.

What then are the tools of understanding? Kant called some of them concepts and others categories, though he sometimes refers to concepts as categories. Both have the same characteristics of imposing order on our perceptions. There are first the concepts of Space and Time. Our minds are made in such a way that we have to order our perceptions in a spatial and temporal way; and they cannot imagine a world which has more than three dimensions or does not obey a temporal sequence. If, therefore, in the noumenal world more than three dimensions or some sort of non-sequential time did not exist, we would be incapable of not grasping that. When he comes to categories, these are an elaboration of Leibniz's 'tools of understanding.' For Leibniz these had been the innate notions of being, substance, unity, identity, contradiction and cause. Kant divided categories into four groups, each of which he then subdivided into three further groups. The more effectively we use our reason, the more fully comprehensible the phenomenal world will be for us. Kant as a child of the Age of Reason trusted implicitly and explicitly that reason will give us a wholly reliable and coherent account of the phenomenal world and an increasingly perfect understanding of the laws of nature which govern the phenomenal world.

This article is an abridged version of an article by Ralph Blumenau that appeared in Philosophy Now entitled Kant and the Thing in itself.

NOISE, HUMAN NATURE AND DEMOCRACY

Sophie van der Linden

I imagine Arthur Schopenhauer would have been happy to die. He had little time for most people and didn't think much of worldly matters. He viewed himself as homeless. The world could not be called his home as it lacked warmth, cordiality and safety. According to its very nature the world was an intensely painful place to be stuck in. He was a frustrated man who had few friends, was abandoned by his family and could not find requited romantic love. His philosophy is like no other and his brutal honesty and satire entirely loveable. Schopenhauer spent most of his life thinking great thoughts albeit adding to his frustration they were not recognized until his last years. Years later Schopenhauer declared the nemesis of any serious intellect to be noise. I hope to explore my world through the thoughts of Arthur Schopenhauer.

Like many philosophies Schopenhauer's metaphysics emerged from wonder. Not wonder corresponding with amazement or awe but the wonder of why the world is such a vile and desolate place. He thought quite literally, "life swings like a pendulum to and fro between pain and boredom". The world is merely representation therefore we cannot look to it for answers about what things really are. The energy force at the center of all things and what causes our representations is demonic energy force called will. The will is blind and it infests everything on earth, humans, animals and inanimate objects. We cannot escape it; it is what propels life forward. It means everything is striving and never satisfied and nothing will ever reach its goals. Therefore everything is eternally frustrated and unhappy. This means that at its very heart, the universe is laden with purposelessness, meaningless conflicts and irrationality.

All life endeavors toward nourishment, preservation and existence. As will is the life force of all things this means the will simultaneously nourishes and destroys itself at every moment. The will is Ouroboros the serpent biting its own tail for infinity. Humans are self-interested self-promoting creatures who are egotistical at the very essence of our beings. Schopenhauer argues we are always in quest of something implying we are always deficient. We cannot achieve lasting happiness through

getting what we want, because there is always more ad infinitum. The fulfillment of desire makes man bored merely opening the gap for another desire. Most humans are completely enchained in will, chasing desires futilely or being bored to death. At the end of all our grappling and grasping for what we think will make us happy (and never does) we are faced with the inevitability of death, the direct opposition to the life-loving will – and our ultimate fear. We are eternally incomplete. This is why Schopenhauer states, “all life is suffering”. Remember, you are going to rot.

Schopenhauer thought that most of us would live and die as egoists with most humans never realizing that the nature of things is so horrid. The lower a person’s intelligence the more he felt at home in the world. These people are at conflict with everything about the world including other humans and themselves. This means that each of us always jumps first, we are self-interested and we are ready to cut others down and seize opportunities for ourselves. We are all always scrambling over each other to get to the top. Reality is only what each person knows and the common man takes representation to be absolute truth, so empathy or sympathy isn’t easy, either. Schopenhauer argued that humans aren’t supposed to be social and are never truly free until they find inner peace and deny will, alone. The disease of will is hard to cure. It is a Hobbesian state of all against all.



His view of common people was very cynical. He believed that mankind was naturally divided by intellect, with the majority being lower. He saw himself as part of the intellectual elite and had little time for ordinary people. He found them annoying. He was frustrated by them, thought they could not be helped, they were insensible, ill mannered and vulgar. Most humans would never question their existence because for them the world is hardly mysterious, because they

think their knowledge exhausts all there is. Other people are a nuisance; they are something we just have to put up with. He speaks of Germans of his time saying that they smoke and slam doors instead of think. A specific characteristic that demonstrates their stupidity and obtuseness, is their toleration and making of pointless noise. Schopenhauer called this a direct proof of “dullness and poverty of thought” .

make the noises stop!!!



Noise silences the brain, hushing and suppressing thought processes in favor of distractions. The simplest sound can throw a person off their mental track, forgetting their train of thought. Toward the end of his life Schopenhauer declared noise as the ultimate ailment of mankind. It made him sick and wrapped chains around the human mind, “depriv(ing) life of all peace and sensibility” . Thoughts are dropped and then shattered into pieces when interrupted. Schopenhauer likens the impact on noise to thought to a diamond being cut up into pieces or an army scattered into merely men. The diamond loses its value as a whole, the army its strength and power.

For thinking to be successful or productive, the brain must be focused on just one particular thing, a task made difficult by noise. He believed only those with an extremely strong mind could overcome noise and “those who are not sensitive to noise... are not sensitive to any kind of intellectual impression: a fact to be assigned to the coarse quality and strong texture of their brain tissues” . It could follow that the majority of human beings didn’t know what it was to think deeply because they were always so over-stimulated. Schopenhauer wrote of his hatred for doors slamming, dogs barking, things hammering and tumbling. He specifies the most piercing offensive noise of his time to be whips cracking. “I would like to know how many great and splendid thoughts these whips have cracked out of the world” .

Compared with today Schopenhauer’s examples of troubling noises are almost laughable. The racket of our everyday lives would likely send Schopenhauer

into shock. Traffic, dogs barking and doors slamming seem to barely be noticeable and blend into silence in our busy lives. For contemporary society noise is extended to refer to the visual also, as we are swarmed with advertising, we are constantly over-stimulated and don't even seem to realize. In the cities we are blanketed by a constant hum of bustling city life at even the quietest of times that we do not seem to even notice. In our homes the persistent vibration of the fridge, the whirr of air-conditioning or heating, never mind the digital noises screaming from our mobile devices.

There are so many things we experience in our contemporary lives that we have very little say about. If we wish to be active participants in modern society, have a job, family and friends there is so much noise we cannot escape. We are bombarded with imagery and told, consciously or subconsciously how to think. With the rapid transitions of phenomena like Facebook, TV, advertising, smartphones and tablets I doubt many would argue with the fact that we are tempted away from productive thoughts and activities all the time. Even when we try to educate ourselves online there is so much information out there we are simply baffled. I would argue that noise has multiplied excessively and intensely in our lifetime but most of us don't seem bothered or aware, we are too entertained. The distraction in our lives means we have little time or means to contemplate or reflect on ourselves, or the world we find ourselves in (which Schopenhauer suggests we ought to do to achieve peace and happiness).

In our lives today Schopenhauer might argue we do not get the silence we need for serious thinkers to emerge, or even to think authentically at all. Only a select few of us have enough determination and will power to isolate themselves both from the will and from the commanding noises of day to day living in order to make something of his brain. Is the society we live in dependent on our quiet and passivity? Are we encouraged to be passive spectators, not to care, or to be neutral? This is something I thought excessively about in the weeks coming up to the recent election.

Every media outlet was spewing out information constantly on billboards, the TV news, banners, public talks, television ads, pamphlets, books, radio and newspaper. Even driving through some of the most remote areas of New Zealand there were big bright shiny sparkly new National Party billboards. This intense noise propelled at society from every angle is easily dizzying; we are told everything is for the best

and everything is right. We are fed masses of hyped up superficial information that skims over the heart of real issues. It is more concerned with smearing the opposition and personal issues things we might find scandalous or entertaining. We are not given time to process. Why is it only on Election Day that this mass feeding of information is halted? It's such bad offense to talk politics on Election Day that fines are imposed for breaking electoral law. Meanwhile every day up to the election we are going about our lives to come home to the news, ads and television leaking information into our brains whether we know it or not, taking up our cognitive space and filling our minds with goodness knows what. It is a game all in all demonstrative of greed and power control. Some people are overwhelmed and some stay out of it completely believing politics is too complicated and a realm above them. Some might get riled up for the wrong reasons. Some feel an affinity and trust to parties based on untrue or superficial information.

Sure we can vote for who's in parliament and sure this could be argued that 'New-Zealand has spoken', but the only freedom we really have is that one vote. The decisions made from there that have potential to derail our agency and freedom are not ours. An example of this is the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement that our government is negotiating presently. If it passes the agreement is destined to have actual, life-altering change on what it means to be a New Zealander. One of the most concerning changes is the Americanization of our healthcare system. Instead of having our own companies regulating what medicines we bring and use in the country, we will be largely bypassed by larger international pharmaceutical companies. With decisions as big as this that are clearly financial and economic at heart lessening the autonomy of New Zealanders, there is little official platform for refusal, as the government speaks representatively of New Zealanders. This is worrying especially when democracy is dependent on a knowing public to be looked after by a government. The TPPA is being negotiated in secret. We are not told the finer details or what other implications it will have and once its signed, we cannot turn back. This is worrying when such big decisions made by our government need to be transparent.

Schopenhauer's theory of what makes a good person also seems to be at odds with democracy. Schopenhauer asserts that if we are to be good, selfless people we need to abolish will and takes on the suffering of the world as our own. This seems inherently opposed to the goals of politicians. We must trust and be confident in their

ability to be good people with other people's interest in their hearts. If we are all egotistically centered like Schopenhauer says, a democratic system at its very conception is making a beeline for corruption. There should be other outlets and voices for change to be implemented. The people should be louder than the leaders. "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered... that place must - at that moment - become the center of the universe."

Inspired by

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/25/opinion/sunday/im-thinking-please-be-quiet.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

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THE UMBRELLA REVOLUTION

