

Arthur Schopenhauer

Criticism of Schopenhauer's personal life

The British philosopher and historian [Bertrand Russell](#) deemed Schopenhauer an insincere person, because judging by his life:

"He habitually dined well, at a good restaurant; he had many trivial love-affairs, which were sensual but not passionate; he was exceedingly quarrelsome and unusually avaricious. ... It is hard to find in his life evidences of any virtue except kindness to animals ... In all other respects he was completely selfish. It is difficult to believe that a man who was profoundly convinced of the virtue of [asceticism](#) and resignation would never have made any attempt to embody his convictions in his practice."^[112]

[Bryan Magee](#) points out that "the answer to such shallow, but not uncommon criticism" is found in a quotation from Schopenhauer:

"It is therefore just as little necessary for the saint to be a philosopher as for the philosopher to be a saint; just as it is not necessary for a perfectly beautiful person to be a great sculptor, or for a great sculptor to be himself a beautiful person. In general, it is a strange demand on a moralist that he should commend no other virtue than that which he himself possesses. To repeat abstractly, universally, and distinctly in concepts the whole inner nature of the world, and thus to deposit it as a reflected image in permanent concepts always ready for the faculty of reason, this and nothing else is philosophy."^[113]

“Great men are like eagles, and build their nest on some lofty solitude”

“A man can only be himself so long as he is alone; and if he does not love solitude, he will neither love freedom nor discover himself; for it is only when he is alone, that he is empowered and free.”

“They tell us that Suicide is the greatest piece of Cowardice... That Suicide is wrong; when it is quite obvious that there is nothing in this world to which every man has a more unassailable title than to his own life and person.”

– [Arthur Schopenhauer](#)

“The person who writes for fools is always sure of a large audience.”

– Arthur Schopenhauer, *Religion: A Dialogue and Other Essays*

“We will gradually become indifferent to what goes on in the minds of other people when we acquire a knowledge of the superficial nature of their thoughts, the narrowness of their views and of the number of their errors. Whoever attaches a lot of value to the opinions of others pays them too much honor.”

– Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*

Man can do what he wills but he cannot will what he wills.

We can do what we wish, but we can only wish what we must.

We forfeit three-fourths of ourselves in order to be like other people.

we must recognise the fact that mankind cannot get on without a certain amount of absurdity, that absurdity is an element in its existence, and illusion indispensable; as indeed other aspects of life testify.

Change alone is eternal, perpetual, immortal. Nothing endures but change.

Talent hits a target no one else can hit; Genius hits a target no one else can see.

The effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence.

The fundament upon which all our knowledge and learning rests is the inexplicable.

But truth acquired by thinking on our own is like a natural limb; it alone really belongs to us.

Every man takes the limits of his own field of vision for the limits of the world.

All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.

This is a quote by Arthur Schopenhauer "Man can do what he wants, but he cannot will what he wills." What is the meaning of this quotation?

Schopenhauer is commenting on the illusory nature of free will.

As human beings capable of rational thought and self-reflection, we imagine ourselves to have "free will," which makes us distinct from inanimate objects and animals. We believe we are masters of our own destinies, because we can choose to conform our actions to our desires (we can "do what we want").

However, *if our choices are determined by our desires*, then the freedom of our choices really depends on whether our desires are "free" in the first place, doesn't it? If we follow the origin of our desires to its base level, we inevitably end up at a source of action that is external to our conscious self, i.e. something we do not choose. For example, I choose to eat this sandwich because I'm hungry. But why am I hungry? Because a lack of nutrients in my body has sent a chemical signal to my brain, triggering it to want to eat. Is my choice to eat this sandwich a free one, if it is ultimately caused by biochemical events outside of my control?

A similar analysis could be applied to any chain of action and desire a person could have. Man is not truly free because he is slave to desires he has no control over; he cannot will what he wills, and thus is no more special or different from any other object in the universe.

Our will is limited by our desires...

"I do not believe in free will. Schopenhauer's words: 'Man can do what he wants, but he cannot will what he wants accompany me in all situations throughout my life and reconcile me with the actions of others, even if they are rather painful to me. This awareness of the lack of free will keeps me from taking myself and my fellow men too seriously as acting as deciding individuals, and from losing my temper.'" - Albert Einstein in "Mein Glaubensbekenntnis", August 1932

NOTE: Einstein was wrong about UNCERTAINTY so probably about this too...

Arthur Schopenhauer (German: [ˈaʁtuʁ ˈʃɔpən.haʊɐ]; 22 February 1788 – 21 September 1860) was a [German philosopher](#). He is best known for his *magnum opus*, [The World as Will and Representation](#) (German: *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*), in which he argues that the phenomenal world is driven by a metaphysical and perpetually dissatisfied [will](#) that continually and malignantly seeks satiation. He also wrote influentially on [aesthetics](#), [ethics](#), and [religion](#).^{[2][3]} [Transcendental idealism](#) provided the basis for much of his thought,^[4] and his atheistic philosophy of the will has been described as an exemplary manifestation of [philosophical pessimism](#).^{[5][6][7][8]} Independently arriving at many of the same conclusions of [Eastern philosophy](#), his solutions to the problems of existence and suffering were consequently similar to those of [Vedantic](#) and [Buddhist](#) thinkers (e.g., [asceticism](#)).^{[9][10]} His doctoral dissertation, [On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason](#), examined the nature of experience in the phenomenal world, and has been influential in the history of [phenomenology](#).^[11]

Schopenhauer's philosophy has proven influential in philosophy, art, psychology, and literature; thinkers who have cited his influence include [Friedrich Nietzsche](#),^[12] [Richard Wagner](#), [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#), [Erwin Schrödinger](#), [Albert Einstein](#),^[13] [Sigmund Freud](#), [Otto Rank](#), [Carl Jung](#), [Joseph Campbell](#), [Leo Tolstoy](#), [Thomas Mann](#), [Thomas Ligotti](#),^[14] and [Jorge Luis Borges](#), among others.

Schopenhauer's birthplace house, ul. Św. Duchy (formerly Heiligegeistgasse)

Arthur Schopenhauer was born on 22 February 1788 in the city of Danzig ([Gdańsk](#)), [Poland](#), on Heiligegeistgasse (known in the present day as Św. Duchy 47), the son of [Johanna Schopenhauer](#) (née Trosiener) and Heinrich Floris Schopenhauer,^[15] both descendants of wealthy German [patrician](#) families. When Danzig became part of [Prussia](#) in 1793, Heinrich re-moved to Hamburg, although his firm continued trading in Danzig. In 1805, Schopenhauer's father may have committed suicide.^[16] Shortly thereafter, Schopenhauer's mother Johanna moved with his sister [Adele](#) to [Weimar](#), then the centre of [German literature](#), to pursue her writing career. After one year, Schopenhauer left the family business in Hamburg to join her. As early as 1799, he started playing the flute.^[17]

He became a student at the [University of Göttingen](#) in 1809. There he studied [metaphysics](#) and [psychology](#) under [Gottlob Ernst Schulze](#), the author of [Aenesidemus](#), who advised him to concentrate on [Plato](#) and [Immanuel Kant](#). In Berlin, from 1811 to 1812, he had attended lectures by the prominent post-Kantian philosopher [Johann Gottlieb Fichte](#) and the theologian [Friedrich Schleiermacher](#).

In 1814, Schopenhauer began his seminal work [The World as Will and Representation](#) (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*). He finished it in 1818 and published it the following year. In [Dresden](#) in 1819, Schopenhauer fathered, with a servant, an illegitimate daughter who was born and died the same year.^{[18][19]} In 1820, Schopenhauer became a lecturer at the [University of Berlin](#). He scheduled his lectures to coincide with those of the famous philosopher [G. W. F. Hegel](#), whom Schopenhauer described as a "clumsy charlatan".^[20] However, only five students turned up to Schopenhauer's lectures, and he dropped out of [academia](#). A late essay, *On University Philosophy*, expressed his resentment towards the work conducted in academies.

While in Berlin, Schopenhauer was named as a defendant in a lawsuit initiated by a woman named Caroline Marquet.^[21] She asked for damages, alleging that Schopenhauer had pushed her. According to Schopenhauer's court testimony, she deliberately annoyed him by raising her voice while standing right outside his door.^[22] Marquet alleged that the philosopher had assaulted and battered her after she refused to leave his doorway. Her companion testified that she saw Marquet prostrate outside his apartment. Because Marquet won the lawsuit, Schopenhauer made payments to her for the next twenty years.^[23] When she died, he wrote on a copy of her death certificate, *Obit anus, abit onus* ("The old woman dies, the burden is lifted").^[24] In 1819 the fortunes of his mother and sister, and himself, were threatened by the failure of the firm in Danzig in which his father had been a director and shareholder. His sister accepted a compromise compensation package of 70 per cent, but Schopenhauer angrily refused this, and eventually recovered 9400 thalers.

In 1821, he fell in love with nineteen-year-old opera singer, Caroline Richter (called Medon), and had a relationship with her for several years. He discarded marriage plans, however, writing, "Marrying means to halve one's rights and double one's duties," and "Marrying means to grasp blindfolded

into a sack hoping to find an eel amongst an assembly of snakes." When he was forty-three years old, he took interest in seventeen-year-old Flora Weiss but she rejected him as recorded in her diary.^[25]

Schopenhauer had a notably strained relationship with his mother Johanna Schopenhauer. After his father's death, Arthur Schopenhauer endured two long years of drudgery as a merchant, in honor of his dead father. Then his mother retired to Weimar, and Arthur Schopenhauer dedicated himself wholly to studies in the gymnasium of [Gotha](#). He left it in disgust after seeing one of the masters lampooned, and went to live with his mother. But by that time she had already opened her famous salon, and Arthur was not compatible with what he considered to be the vain, ceremonious ways of the salon. He was also disgusted by the ease with which Johanna Schopenhauer had forgotten his father's memory. Consequently, he attempted university life. There, he wrote his first book, [*On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*](#). His mother informed him that the book was incomprehensible and it was unlikely that anyone would ever buy a copy. In a fit of temper Arthur Schopenhauer told her that his work would be read long after the "rubbish" she wrote would have been totally forgotten.^{[26][27]}

In 1831, a [cholera](#) epidemic broke out in Berlin and Schopenhauer left the city. Schopenhauer settled permanently in [Frankfurt](#) in 1833, where he remained for the next twenty-seven years, living alone except for a succession of pet poodles named [Atman](#) and Butz. The numerous notes that he made during these years, amongst others on aging, were published [posthumously](#) under the title *Senilia*.

Schopenhauer had a robust constitution, but in 1860 his health began to deteriorate. He died of heart failure on 21 September 1860 while sitting at home on his couch with his cat. He was 72.^[28]

Thought^[edit]

Philosophy of the "Will"^[edit]

Main article: [The World as Will and Representation](#)



Schopenhauer in 1815, second of the critical five years of the initial composition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*

A key focus of Schopenhauer was his investigation of individual motivation. Before Schopenhauer, Hegel had popularized the concept of *Zeitgeist*, the idea that society consisted of a *collective consciousness* which moved in a distinct direction, dictating the actions of its members. Schopenhauer, a reader of both Kant and Hegel, criticized their logical optimism and the belief that individual morality could be determined by society and reason. Schopenhauer believed that humans were motivated by only their own basic desires, or *Wille zum Leben* ("Will to Live"), which directed all of mankind.^[20]

For Schopenhauer, human desire was futile, illogical, directionless, and, by extension, so was all human action in the world. He wrote "Man can indeed do what he wants, but he cannot will what he wants". In this sense, he adhered to the Fichtean principle of idealism: "the world is *for* a subject". This idealism so presented, immediately commits it to an ethical attitude, unlike the purely epistemological concerns of *Descartes* and *Berkeley*. To Schopenhauer, the Will is a malignant,^[21] metaphysical existence which controls not only the actions of individual, intelligent agents, but ultimately all observable phenomena; an evil to be terminated via mankind's duties: *asceticism* and chastity.^[22] He is credited with one of the most famous opening lines of philosophy: "The world is my representation". Will, for Schopenhauer, is what Kant called the "*thing-in-itself*."^[23] *Nietzsche* was greatly influenced by this idea of Will, while developing it in a different direction.

Art and aesthetics^[edit]

Main article: *Arthur Schopenhauer's aesthetics*

For Schopenhauer, human desiring, "willing," and craving cause *suffering or pain*. A temporary way to escape this pain is through aesthetic contemplation (a method comparable to *Zapffe's "Sublimation"*). Aesthetic contemplation allows one to escape this pain—albeit temporarily—because it stops one perceiving the world as mere presentation. Instead, one no longer perceives the world as an object of perception (therefore as subject to the Principle of Sufficient Grounds; time, space and causality) from which one is separated; rather one becomes one with that perception: "*one can thus no longer separate the perceiver from the perception*" (*The World as Will and Representation*, section 34). From this immersion with the world one no longer views oneself as an individual who suffers in the world due to one's individual will but, rather, becomes a "*subject of cognition*" to a perception that is "*Pure, will-less, timeless*" (section 34) where the essence, "ideas," of the world are shown. Art is the practical consequence of this brief aesthetic contemplation as it attempts to depict one's immersion with the world, thus tries to depict the essence/pure ideas of the world. Music, for Schopenhauer, was the purest form of art because it was the one that depicted the will itself without it appearing as subject to the Principle of Sufficient Grounds, therefore as an individual object. According to Daniel Albright, "Schopenhauer thought that *music* was the only art that did not merely copy ideas, but actually embodied the will itself."^[24]

He deemed music to be a timeless, universal language which is comprehended everywhere, and can imbue global enthusiasm, if in possession of a significant melody.^[25]

Mathematics

Schopenhauer's *realist* views on mathematics are evident in his criticism of the contemporary attempts to prove the *parallel postulate* in *Euclidean geometry*. Writing shortly before the logical independence of the axiom was demonstrated by the discovery of *hyperbolic geometry*, and long before the *general theory of relativity* revealed that it does not express a property of physical space, Schopenhauer criticized mathematicians for trying to prove from indirect *concepts* that which he held to be directly evident from *perception*.

The Euclidean method of demonstration has brought forth from its own womb its most striking parody and caricature in the famous controversy over the theory of *parallels*, and in the attempts, repeated every year, to prove the eleventh axiom^[26] (also known as the fifth postulate). The *axiom* asserts, and that indeed through the indirect criterion

of a third intersecting line, that two lines inclined to each other (for this is the precise meaning of "less than two right angles"), if produced far enough, must meet. Now this truth is supposed to be too complicated to pass as self-evident, and therefore needs a proof; but no such proof can be produced, just because there is nothing more immediate.^[36]

Throughout his writings,^[36] Schopenhauer criticized the logical derivation of philosophies and mathematics from mere concepts, instead of from intuitive perceptions.

In fact, it seems to me that the logical method is in this way reduced to an absurdity. But it is precisely through the controversies over this, together with the futile attempts to demonstrate the *directly* certain as merely *indirectly* certain, that the independence and clearness of intuitive evidence appear in contrast with the uselessness and difficulty of logical proof, a contrast as instructive as it is amusing. The direct certainty will not be admitted here, just because it is no merely logical certainty following from the concept, and thus resting solely on the relation of predicate to subject, according to the principle of contradiction. But that eleventh axiom regarding parallel lines is a [synthetic proposition a priori](#), and as such has the guarantee of pure, not empirical, perception; this perception is just as immediate and certain as is the [principle of contradiction](#) itself, from which all proofs originally derive their certainty. At bottom this holds good of every geometrical theorem

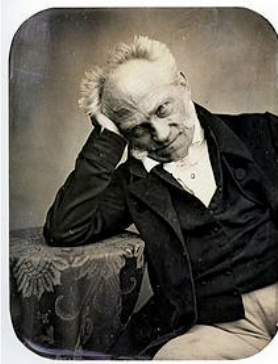
Although Schopenhauer could see no justification for trying to prove Euclid's parallel postulate, he did see a reason for examining another of Euclid's axioms.^[37]

It surprises me that the eighth axiom,^[38] "Figures that coincide with one another are equal to one another," is not rather attacked. For "*coinciding with one another*" is either a mere [tautology](#), or something quite [empirical](#), belonging not to pure intuition or perception, but to external sensuous experience. Thus it presupposes mobility of the figures, but [matter](#) alone is movable in [space](#). Consequently, this reference to coincidence with one another forsakes pure space, the sole element of [geometry](#), in order to pass over to the material and empirical.^[39]

This follows [Kant](#)'s reasoning.^[39]

Ethics

Schopenhauer's moral theory proposed that only [compassion](#) can drive moral acts. According to Schopenhauer, compassion alone is the good of the object of the acts, that is, they cannot be inspired by either the prospect of personal utility or the feeling of duty. Mankind can also be guided by [egoism](#) and [malice](#). Egotistic acts are those guided by self-interest, desire for pleasure or happiness. Schopenhauer believed most of our deeds belong to this class. Acts of malice are different from egotistic acts. As in the case of acts of compassion, these do not target personal utility. Their aim is to cause damage to others, independently of personal gains. He believed, like [Swami Vivekananda](#) in the unity of all with one-self and also believed that ego is the origin of pain and conflicts, that reduction of ego frames the moral principles.^[40]



Schopenhauer in 1852

According to Schopenhauer, whenever we make a choice, "we assume as necessary that decision was preceded by something from which it ensued, and which we call the ground or reason, or more accurately the motive, of the resultant action."^[41] Choices are not made freely. Our actions are necessary and determined because "every human being, even every animal, after the motive has appeared, must carry out the action which alone is in accordance with his inborn and immutable character."^[42] A definite action inevitably results when a particular motive influences a person's given, unchangeable character. The State, Schopenhauer claimed, punishes criminals in order to prevent

future crimes. It does so by placing "beside every possible motive for committing a wrong a more powerful motive for leaving it undone, in the inescapable punishment. Accordingly, the criminal code is as complete a register as possible of counter-motives to all criminal actions that can possibly be imagined...."^[43]

...the law and its fulfillment, namely punishment, are directed essentially to the *future*, not to the *past*. This distinguishes *punishment* from *revenge*, for revenge is motivated by what has happened, and hence by the past as such. All retaliation for wrong by inflicting a pain without any object for the future is revenge, and can have no other purpose than consolation for the suffering one has endured by the sight of the suffering one has caused in another. Such a thing is wickedness and cruelty, and cannot be ethically justified. ...the object of punishment...is deterrence from crime.... Object and purpose for the future distinguish punishment from revenge, and punishment has this object only when it is inflicted *in fulfillment of a law*. Only in this way does it proclaim itself to be inevitable and infallible for every future case; and thus it obtains for the law the power to deter....^{[43][44]}

Should capital punishment be legal? "For safeguarding the lives of citizens," he asserted, "capital punishment is therefore absolutely necessary."^[45] "The murderer," wrote Schopenhauer, "who is condemned to death according to the law must, it is true, be now used as a mere *means*, and with complete right. For public security, which is the principal object of the State, is disturbed by him; indeed it is abolished if the law remains unfulfilled. The murderer, his life, his person, must be the *means* of fulfilling the law, and thus of re-establishing public security."^[46] Schopenhauer disagreed with those who would abolish capital punishment. "Those who would like to abolish it should be given the answer: 'First remove murder from the world, and then capital punishment ought to follow.'"^[45]

People, according to Schopenhauer, cannot be improved. They can only be influenced by strong motives that overpower criminal motives. Schopenhauer declared that "real moral reform is not at all possible, but only determent from the deed...."^[45]

He claimed that this doctrine was not original with him. Previously, it appeared in the writings of [Plato](#),^[47] [Seneca](#), [Hobbes](#), [Pufendorf](#), and [Anselm Feuerbach](#). Schopenhauer declared that their teaching was corrupted by subsequent errors and therefore was in need of clarification.^[43]

God

Even though Schopenhauer ended his treatise on the freedom of human will with the postulate of everyone's responsibility for their character and, consequently, acts—the responsibility following from one's being the Will as [noumenon](#) (from which also all the characters and creations come)—he considered his views incompatible with [theism](#), on grounds of [fatalism](#) and, more generally, responsibility for evil. In Schopenhauer's philosophy the dogmas of Christianity lose their significance,^[48] and the "Last Judgment" is no longer preceded by anything—"the world is itself the Last Judgment on it"^[49] Whereas God, if he existed, would be evil.^[50]

Psychology

Philosophers have not traditionally been impressed by the tribulations of sex, but Schopenhauer addressed it and related concepts forthrightly:

...one ought rather to be surprised that a thing [sex] which plays throughout so important a part in human life has hitherto practically been disregarded by philosophers altogether, and lies before us as raw and untreated material.^[51]

He gave a name to a force within man which he felt had invariably precedence over reason: the Will to Live or Will to Life (*Wille zum Leben*), defined as an inherent drive within human beings, and indeed all creatures, to stay alive; a force which inveigles^[52] us into reproducing.

Schopenhauer refused to conceive of love as either trifling or accidental, but rather understood it to be an immensely powerful force lying unseen within man's [psyche](#) and dramatically shaping the world:

The ultimate aim of all love affairs ... is more important than all other aims in man's life; and therefore it is quite worthy of the profound seriousness with which everyone pursues it. What is decided by it is nothing less than the composition of the next generation ...^[53]

These ideas foreshadowed the [discovery of evolution](#), [Freud's](#) concepts of the [libido](#) and the [unconscious mind](#), and [evolutionary psychology](#) in general.^[53]

Political and social thought^[edit]

Politics^[edit]



Bust in [Frankfurt am Main](#)

Schopenhauer's politics were, for the most part, an echo of his system of ethics (the latter being expressed in *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik*, available in English as two separate books, [On the Basis of Morality](#) and [On the Freedom of the Will](#)). Ethics also occupies about one quarter of his central work, [The World as Will and Representation](#).

In occasional political comments in his [Parenga and Paralipomena](#) and *Manuscript Remains*, Schopenhauer described himself as a proponent of [limited government](#). What was essential, he thought, was that the state should "leave each man free to work out his own [salvation](#)", and so long as government was thus limited, he would "prefer to be ruled by a lion than one of [his] fellow rats" — i.e., by a [monarch](#), rather than a [democrat](#). Schopenhauer shared the view of [Thomas Hobbes](#) on the necessity of the state, and of state action, to check the destructive tendencies innate to our species. He also defended the independence of the legislative, judicial and executive branches of power, and a monarch as an impartial element able to practise justice (in a practical and everyday sense, not a cosmological one).^[64] He declared monarchy as "that which is natural to man" for "intelligence has always under a monarchical government a much better chance against its irreconcilable and ever-present foe, stupidity" and disparaged republicanism as "unnatural as it is unfavourable to the higher intellectual life and the arts and sciences."^[65]

Schopenhauer, by his own admission, did not give much thought to politics, and several times he writes proudly of how little attention he had paid "to political affairs of [his] day". In a life that spanned several revolutions in French and German government, and a few continent-shaking wars, he did indeed maintain his aloof position of "minding not the times but the eternities". He wrote many disparaging remarks about Germany and the Germans. A typical example is, "For a German it is even good to have somewhat lengthy words in his mouth, for he thinks slowly, and they give him time to reflect."^[66]

Schopenhauer attributed civilizational primacy to the northern "white races" due to their sensitivity and creativity (except for the ancient Egyptians and Hindus whom he saw as equal):

The highest civilization and culture, apart from the ancient Hindus and Egyptians, are found exclusively among the white races; and even with many dark peoples, the ruling caste or race is fairer in colour than the rest and has, therefore, evidently immigrated, for example, the Brahmans, the Incas, and the rulers of the South Sea Islands. All this is due to the fact that necessity is the mother of invention because those tribes that emigrated early to the north, and there gradually became white, had to develop all their intellectual powers and invent and perfect all the arts in their struggle with need, want and misery, which in their many forms were brought about by the climate. This they had to do in order to make up for the parsimony of nature and out of it all came their high civilization.^[67]

Despite this, he was adamantly against differing treatment of races, was fervently anti-slavery, and supported the [abolitionist](#) movement in the United States. He describes the treatment of "[our] innocent black brothers whom force and injustice have delivered into [the slave-master's] devilish clutches" as "belonging to the blackest pages of mankind's criminal record".^[68]

Schopenhauer additionally maintained a marked metaphysical and political [anti-Judaism](#). Schopenhauer argued that Christianity constituted a revolt against the materialistic basis of Judaism, exhibiting an Indian-influenced ethics reflecting the [Aryan-Vedic](#) theme of spiritual "self-conquest." This he saw as opposed to what he held to be the ignorant drive toward earthly utopianism and superficiality of a worldly Jewish spirit:

While all other religions endeavor to explain to the people by symbols the metaphysical significance of life, the religion of the Jews is entirely immanent and furnishes nothing but a mere war-cry in the struggle with other nations.^[69]

Views on women

In Schopenhauer's 1851 essay *Of Women*, he expressed his opposition to what he called "Teutonic-Christian stupidity" of reflexive unexamined reverence ("abgeschmackten Weiberveneration")^[60] for the female. Schopenhauer wrote that "Women are directly fitted for acting as the nurses and teachers of our early childhood by the fact that they are themselves childish, frivolous and short-sighted". He opined that women are deficient in artistic faculties and sense of justice, and expressed opposition to monogamy. Indeed, Rodgers and Thompson in *Philosophers Behaving Badly* call Schopenhauer "a misogynist without rival in...Western philosophy." He claimed that "woman is by nature meant to obey". The essay does give some compliments, however: that "women are decidedly more sober in their judgment than [men] are" and are more sympathetic to the suffering of others."

Schopenhauer's controversial writings have influenced many, from Friedrich Nietzsche to nineteenth-century feminists.^[61] Schopenhauer's biological analysis of the difference between the sexes, and their separate roles in the struggle for survival and reproduction, anticipates some of the claims that were later ventured by sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists.^[62]

After the elderly Schopenhauer sat for a sculpture portrait by Elisabet Ney, he told Richard Wagner's friend Malwida von Meysenbug, "I have not yet spoken my last word about women. I believe that if a woman succeeds in withdrawing from the mass, or rather raising herself above the mass, she grows ceaselessly and more than a man."^[63]



Schopenhauer at age 58 on 16 May 1846

Schopenhauer believed that personality and [intellect](#) were inherited. He quotes Horace's saying, "From the brave and good are the brave descended" (*Odes*, iv, 4, 29) and Shakespeare's line from [Cymbeline](#), "Cowards father cowards, and base things sire base" (IV, 2) to reinforce his hereditarian argument.^[64] Mechanistically, Schopenhauer believed that a person inherits his level of intellect through his mother, and personal character through one's father.^[65] This belief in heritability of traits informed Schopenhauer's view of love – placing it at the highest level of importance. For Schopenhauer the "final aim of all love intrigues, be they comic or tragic, is really of more importance than all other ends in human life. What it all turns upon is nothing less than the composition of the next generation.... It is not the weal or woe of any one individual, but that of the human race to come, which is here at stake." This view of the importance for the species of whom we choose to love was reflected in his views on [eugenics](#) or good breeding. Here Schopenhauer wrote:

With our knowledge of the complete unalterability both of character and of mental faculties, we are led to the view that a real and thorough improvement of the human race might be reached not so much from outside as from within, not so much by theory and instruction as rather by the path of generation. Plato had something of the kind in mind when, in the fifth book of his *Republic*, he explained his plan for increasing and improving his warrior caste. If we could [castrate](#) all [scoundrels](#) and stick all stupid geese in a convent, and give men of noble character a whole [harem](#), and procure men, and indeed thorough men, for all girls of intellect and understanding, then a generation would soon arise which would produce a better age than that of [Pericles](#).^[66]

In another context, Schopenhauer reiterated his antidemocratic-eugenic thesis: "If you want Utopian plans, I would say: the only solution to the problem is the [despotism](#) of the wise and noble members of a genuine aristocracy, a genuine nobility, achieved by [mating](#) the most magnanimous men with the cleverest and most gifted women. This proposal constitutes my Utopia and my Platonic Republic".^[67] Analysts (e.g., Keith Ansell-Pearson) have suggested that Schopenhauer's advocacy of anti-[egalitarianism](#) and eugenics influenced the neo-aristocratic philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, who initially considered Schopenhauer his mentor.^[68]

Animal welfare

As a consequence of his [monistic](#) philosophy, Schopenhauer was very concerned about the welfare of animals.^[69] For him, all individual animals, including humans, are essentially the same, being phenomenal manifestations of the one underlying Will. The word "will" designated, for him, force, power, impulse, energy, and desire; it is the closest word we have that can signify both the real essence of all external things and also our own direct, inner experience. Since everything is basically Will, then humans and animals are fundamentally the same and can recognize themselves in each other.^[70] For this reason, he claimed that a good person would have sympathy for animals, who are our fellow sufferers.

Compassion for animals is intimately associated with goodness of character, and it may be confidently asserted that he who is cruel to living creatures cannot be a good man.^[71]

Nothing leads more definitely to a recognition of the identity of the essential nature in animal and human phenomena than a study of zoology and anatomy.^[72]

The assumption that animals are without rights and the illusion that our treatment of them has no moral significance is a positively outrageous example of Western crudity and barbarity. Universal compassion is the only guarantee of morality.^[73]

In 1841, he praised the establishment, in London, of the [Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#), and also the Animals' Friends Society in Philadelphia. Schopenhauer even went so far as to protest against the use of the pronoun "it" in reference to animals because it led to the treatment of them as though they were inanimate things.^[74] To reinforce his points, Schopenhauer referred to anecdotal reports of the look in the eyes of a monkey who had been shot^[75] and also the grief of a baby elephant whose mother had been killed by a hunter.^[76]

He was very attached to his succession of pet poodles. Schopenhauer criticized [Spinoza's](#)^[77] belief that animals are to be used as a mere means for the satisfaction of humans.^{[78][79]}

Views on homosexuality and pederasty

Schopenhauer was also one of the first philosophers since the days of [Greek philosophy](#) to address the subject of male homosexuality. In the third, expanded edition of *The World as Will and Representation* (1859), Schopenhauer added an appendix to his chapter on the "Metaphysics of Sexual Love". He also wrote that homosexuality did have the benefit of preventing ill-begotten children. Concerning this, he stated, "... the vice we are considering appears to work directly against the aims and ends of nature, and that in a matter that is all important and of the greatest concern to her, it must in fact serve these very aims, although only indirectly, as a means for preventing greater evils."^[80] Shrewdly anticipating the interpretive distortion, on the part of the popular mind, of his attempted scientific *explanation of pederasty* as personal *advocacy* (when he had otherwise described the act, in terms of spiritual ethics, as an "objectionable aberration"), Schopenhauer sarcastically concludes the appendix with the statement that "by expounding these paradoxical ideas, I wanted to grant to the professors of philosophy a small favour, for they are very disconcerted by the ever-increasing publicization of my philosophy which they so carefully concealed. I have done so by giving them the opportunity of slandering me by saying that I defend and commend pederasty."^[81]

Intellectual interests and affinities[\[edit\]](#)

Indology

Schopenhauer read the Latin translation of the [Upanishads](#) which had been translated by French writer [Anquetil du Perron](#) from the Persian translation of Prince [Dara Shikoh](#) entitled *Sirre-Akbar* ("The Great Secret"). He was so impressed by their philosophy that he called them "the production of the highest human wisdom," and considered them to contain superhuman conceptions. The Upanishads was a great source of inspiration to Schopenhauer, and writing about them he said:

It is the most satisfying and elevating reading (with the exception of the original text) which is possible in the world; it has been the solace of my life and will be the solace of my death.^[82]

It is well known that the book *Oupnekhat* (Upanishad) always lay open on his table, and he invariably studied it before sleeping at night. He called the opening up of Sanskrit literature "the greatest gift of our century", and predicted that the philosophy and knowledge of the Upanishads would become the cherished faith of the West.^[83]

Schopenhauer was first introduced to the 1802 Latin [Upanishad](#) translation through Friedrich Majer. They met during the winter of 1813–1814 in [Weimar](#) at the home of Schopenhauer's mother according to the biographer Sanfranski. Majer was a follower of [Herder](#), and an early [Indologist](#). Schopenhauer did not begin a serious study of the Indic texts, however, until the summer of 1814. Sansfranski maintains that between 1815 and 1817, Schopenhauer had another important cross-pollination with Indian thought in [Dresden](#). This was through his neighbor of two years, [Karl Christian Friedrich Krause](#). Krause was then a minor and rather unorthodox philosopher who attempted to mix his own ideas with that of ancient Indian wisdom. Krause had also mastered [Sanskrit](#), unlike Schopenhauer, and the two developed a professional relationship. It was from Krause that Schopenhauer learned [meditation](#) and received the closest thing to expert advice concerning Indian thought.^[84]

Most noticeable, in the case of Schopenhauer's work, was the significance of the [Chandogya Upanishad](#), whose [Mahavakya](#), [Tat Tvam Asi](#) is mentioned throughout *The World as Will and Representation*.^[65]

Buddhism [\[edit\]](#)

Schopenhauer noted a correspondence between his doctrines and the [Four Noble Truths](#) of [Buddhism](#).^[66] Similarities centered on the principles that life involves suffering, that suffering is caused by desire ([tanhā](#)), and that the extinction of desire leads to liberation. Thus three of the four "truths of the Buddha" correspond to Schopenhauer's doctrine of the will.^[67] In Buddhism, however, while greed and lust are always unskillful, desire is ethically variable – it can be skillful, unskillful, or neutral.^[68]

For Schopenhauer, Will had [ontological](#) primacy over the [intellect](#); in other words, desire is understood to be prior to thought. Schopenhauer felt this was similar to notions of [purusārtha](#) or goals of life in [Vedānta Hinduism](#).

In Schopenhauer's philosophy, denial of the will is attained by either:

- personal experience of an extremely great suffering that leads to loss of the will to live; or
- knowledge of the essential nature of life in the world through observation of the suffering of other people.

However, Buddhist [nirvāṇa](#) is not equivalent to the condition that Schopenhauer described as denial of the will. Nirvāṇa is not the extinguishing of the *person* as some Western scholars have thought, but only the "extinguishing" (the literal meaning of nirvana) of the flames of greed, hatred, and delusion that assail a person's character.^[69] Occult historian [Joscelyn Godwin](#) (1945–) stated, "It was Buddhism that inspired the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, and, through him, attracted [Richard Wagner](#).^[69] This [Orientalism](#) reflected the struggle of the German Romantics, in the words of [Leon Poliakov](#), to free themselves from [Judeo-Christian](#) fetters".^[69] In contradistinction to Godwin's claim that Buddhism inspired Schopenhauer, the philosopher himself made the following statement in his discussion of religions:^[69]

If I wished to take the results of my philosophy as the standard of truth, I should have to concede to Buddhism pre-eminence over the others. In any case, it must be a pleasure to me to see my doctrine in such close agreement with a religion that the majority of men on earth hold as their own, for this numbers far more followers than any other. And this agreement must be yet the more pleasing to me, inasmuch as *in my philosophizing I have certainly not been under its influence* [emphasis added]. For up till 1818, when my work appeared, there was to be found in Europe only a very few accounts of Buddhism.^[69]

Buddhist philosopher [Nishitani Keiji](#), however, sought to distance Buddhism from Schopenhauer.^[64] While Schopenhauer's philosophy may sound rather mystical in such a summary, his [methodology](#) was resolutely [empirical](#), rather than speculative or transcendental:

Philosophy ... is a science, and as such has no articles of faith; accordingly, in it nothing can be assumed as existing except what is either positively given empirically, or demonstrated through indubitable conclusions.^[69]

Also note:

This actual world of what is knowable, in which we are and which is in us, remains both the material and the limit of our consideration.^[66]

The argument that Buddhism affected Schopenhauer's philosophy more than any other [Dharmic](#) faith loses more credence when viewed in light of the fact that Schopenhauer did not begin a serious study of Buddhism until after the publication of *The World as Will and Representation* in 1818.^[67] Scholars have started to revise earlier views about Schopenhauer's discovery of Buddhism. Proof of early interest and influence, however, appears in Schopenhauer's 1815/16 notes (transcribed and translated by Urs App) about Buddhism. They are included in a recent case study that traces Schopenhauer's interest in Buddhism and documents its influence.^[68] Other scholarly work questions how similar Schopenhauer's philosophy actually is to Buddhism.^[69]

Influences [\[edit\]](#)

Schopenhauer said he was influenced by the [Upanishads](#), [Immanuel Kant](#) and [Plato](#). References to [Eastern philosophy and religion](#) appear frequently in Schopenhauer's writing. As noted above, he appreciated the

teachings of the [Buddha](#) and even called himself a "Buddhist".^[100] He said^[101] that his philosophy could not have been conceived before these teachings were available.

Concerning the Upanishads and [Vedas](#), he writes in *The World as Will and Representation*:

If the reader has also received the benefit of the Vedas, the access to which by means of the Upanishads is in my eyes the greatest privilege which this still young century (1818) may claim before all previous centuries, if then the reader, I say, has received his initiation in primeval Indian wisdom, and received it with an open heart, he will be prepared in the very best way for hearing what I have to tell him. It will not sound to him strange, as to many others, much less disagreeable; for I might, if it did not sound conceited, contend that every one of the detached statements which constitute the Upanishads, may be deduced as a necessary result from the fundamental thoughts which I have to enunciate, though those deductions themselves are by no means to be found there.^[102]

Among Schopenhauer's other influences were:

[Shakespeare](#),^[103] [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](#), [John Locke](#), [Thomas Reid](#), [Baruch Spinoza](#), [Matthias Claudius](#), [George Berkeley](#), [David Hume](#), and [René Descartes](#).^[104]

Critique of Kant and Hegel^[edit]



Schopenhauer in March 1859

Critique of the Kantian philosophy

Main article: [Critique of the Kantian philosophy](#)

See also: [On the Basis of Morality](#) and [Schopenhauer's criticism of Kant's schemata](#)

Schopenhauer accepted Kant's double-aspect of the universe – the [phenomenal](#) (world of experience) and the [noumenal](#) (the true world, independent of experience). Some commentators suggest that Schopenhauer claimed that the noumenon, or thing-in-itself, was the basis for Schopenhauer's concept of the [will](#). Other commentators suggest that Schopenhauer considered [will](#) to be only a subset of the "thing-in-itself" class, namely that which we can most directly experience.^[105]

Schopenhauer's identification of the Kantian *noumenon* (i.e., the actually existing entity) with what he termed "will" deserves some explanation. The noumenon was what Kant called the *Ding an sich* (the Thing in Itself), the reality that is the foundation of our [sensory](#) and [mental](#) representations of an external world. In Kantian terms, those sensory and mental representations are mere phenomena. Schopenhauer departed from Kant in his description of the relationship between the phenomenon and the noumenon. According to Kant, things-in-themselves ground the phenomenal representations in our minds; Schopenhauer, on the other hand, believed phenomena and noumena to be two different sides of the same coin. Noumena do not *cause* phenomena, but rather phenomena are simply the way by which our minds perceive the

noumena, according to the [principle of sufficient reason](#). This is explained more fully in Schopenhauer's doctoral thesis, [On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason](#).

Schopenhauer's second major departure from Kant's epistemology concerns the body. Kant's philosophy was formulated as a response to the radical [philosophical skepticism](#) of David Hume, who claimed that causality could not be observed empirically. Schopenhauer begins by arguing that Kant's demarcation between external objects, knowable only as phenomena, and the Thing in Itself of noumenon, contains a significant omission. There is, in fact, one physical object we know more intimately than we know any object of sense perception: our own body.

We know our [human bodies](#) have boundaries and occupy space, the same way other objects known only through our named senses do. Though we seldom think of our body as a physical object, we know even before reflection that it shares some of an object's properties. We understand that a watermelon cannot successfully occupy the same space as an oncoming truck; we know that if we tried to repeat the experiment with our own body, we would obtain similar results – we know this even if we do not understand the [physics](#) involved.

We know that our consciousness inhabits a physical body, similar to other physical objects only known as phenomena. Yet our consciousness is not commensurate with our body. Most of us possess the power of voluntary motion. We usually are not aware of the breathing of our [lungs](#) or the beating of our [heart](#) unless somehow our attention is called to them. Our ability to control either is limited. Our [kidneys](#) command our attention on their schedule rather than one we choose. Few of us have any idea what our [liver](#) is doing right now, though this organ is as needful as lungs, heart, or kidneys. The conscious mind is the servant, not the master, of these and other organs; these organs have an agenda which the conscious mind did not choose, and over which it has limited power.

When Schopenhauer identifies the *noumenon* with the desires, needs, and impulses in us that we name "will," what he is saying is that we participate in the reality of an otherwise unachievable world outside the mind through will. We cannot *prove* that our mental picture of an outside world corresponds with a reality by reasoning; through will, we know – without thinking – that the world can stimulate us. We suffer fear, or desire: these states arise involuntarily; they arise prior to reflection; they arise even when the conscious mind would prefer to hold them at bay. The rational mind is, for Schopenhauer, a leaf borne along in a stream of pre-reflective and largely unconscious emotion. That stream is will, and through will, if not through logic, we can participate in the underlying reality beyond mere phenomena. It is for this reason that Schopenhauer identifies the *noumenon* with what we call our will.

In his criticism of Kant, Schopenhauer claimed that sensation and understanding are separate and distinct abilities. Yet, for Kant, an object is known through each of them. Kant wrote: "... [T]here are two stems of human knowledge ... namely, sensibility and understanding, objects being given by the former [sensibility] and thought by the latter [understanding]."¹⁰⁶ Schopenhauer disagreed. He asserted that mere sense impressions, not objects, are given by sensibility. According to Schopenhauer, objects are intuitively perceived by understanding and are discursively thought by reason (Kant had claimed that (1) the understanding thinks objects through concepts and that (2) reason seeks the unconditioned or ultimate answer to "why?"). Schopenhauer said that Kant's mistake regarding perception resulted in all of the obscurity and difficult confusion that is exhibited in the Transcendental Analytic section of his critique.

Lastly, Schopenhauer departed from Kant in how he interpreted the [Platonic ideas](#). In [The World as Will and Representation](#) Schopenhauer explicitly stated:

...Kant used the word [Idea] wrongly as well as illegitimately, although Plato had already taken possession of it, and used it most appropriately.

Instead Schopenhauer relied upon the [Neoplatonist](#) interpretation of the biographer [Diogenes Laërtius](#) from [Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers](#). In reference to Plato's Ideas, Schopenhauer quotes Laërtius verbatim in an explanatory footnote.

Diogenes Laërtius (III, 12) Plato ideas in natura velut exemplaria dixit subsistere; cetera his esse similia, ad istarum similitudinem consistencia. (Plato teaches that the Ideas exist in nature, so to speak, as patterns or prototypes, and that the remainder of things only resemble them, and exist as their copies.)¹⁰⁷

Critique of Hegel[\[edit\]](#)

Schopenhauer expressed his dislike for the philosophy of his contemporary [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel](#) many times in his published works. The following quotations are typical:

If I were to say that the so-called philosophy of this fellow Hegel is a colossal piece of mystification which will yet provide posterity with an inexhaustible theme for laughter at our times, that it is a [pseudo-philosophy](#) paralyzing all mental powers, stifling all real thinking, and, by the most outrageous misuse of language, putting in its place the hollowest, most senseless, thoughtless, and, as is confirmed by its success, most stupefying verbiage, I should be quite right.

Further, if I were to say that this summus philosophus [...] scribbled nonsense quite unlike any mortal before him, so that whoever could read his most eulogized work, the so-called *Phenomenology of the Mind*, without feeling as if he were in a madhouse, would qualify as an inmate for [Bedlam](#), I should be no less right.^[108]

At first Fichte and Schelling shine as the heroes of this epoch; to be followed by the man who is quite unworthy even of them, and greatly their inferior in point of talent --- I mean the stupid and clumsy charlatan Hegel.^[109]

In his Foreword to the first edition of his work *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik*, Schopenhauer suggested that he had shown Hegel to have fallen prey to the [Post hoc ergo propter hoc](#) fallacy.

Schopenhauer suggested that Hegel's works were filled with "castles of abstraction," and that Hegel used deliberately impressive but ultimately vacuous verbiage.^[110] He also thought that his glorification of church and state were designed for personal advantage and had little to do with the search for philosophical [truth](#).^[110] For instance, the [Right Hegelians](#) interpreted Hegel as viewing the Prussian state of his day as perfect and the goal of all history up until then.^[111]

Criticism of Schopenhauer's personal life

The British philosopher and historian [Bertrand Russell](#) deemed Schopenhauer an insincere person, because judging by his life:

"He habitually dined well, at a good restaurant; he had many trivial love-affairs, which were sensual but not passionate; he was exceedingly quarrelsome and unusually avaricious. ... It is hard to find in his life evidences of any virtue except kindness to animals ... In all other respects he was completely selfish. It is difficult to believe that a man who was profoundly convinced of the virtue of [asceticism](#) and resignation would never have made any attempt to embody his convictions in his practice."^[112]

[Bryan Magee](#) points out that "the answer to such shallow, but not uncommon criticism" is found in a quotation from Schopenhauer:

"It is therefore just as little necessary for the saint to be a philosopher as for the philosopher to be a saint; just as it is not necessary for a perfectly beautiful person to be a great sculptor, or for a great sculptor to be himself a beautiful person. In general, it is a strange demand on a moralist that he should commend no other virtue than that which he himself possesses. To repeat abstractly, universally, and distinctly in concepts the whole inner nature of the world, and thus to deposit it as a reflected image in permanent concepts always ready for the faculty of reason, this and nothing else is philosophy."^[113]

Influence^[edit]



Caricature of Schopenhauer by [Wilhelm Busch](#) (1832–1908)

Schopenhauer has had a massive influence upon later thinkers, though more so in the [arts](#) (especially literature and music) and [psychology](#) than in philosophy. His popularity peaked in the early twentieth century, especially during the [Modernist](#) era, and waned somewhat thereafter. Nevertheless, a number of recent publications have reinterpreted and modernised the study of Schopenhauer. His theory is also being explored by some modern philosophers as a precursor to [evolutionary theory](#) and modern evolutionary psychology.^[114]

Russian writer and philosopher [Leo Tolstoy](#) was greatly influenced by Schopenhauer. After reading Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, Tolstoy gradually became converted to the ascetic morality upheld in that work as the proper spiritual path for the upper classes: "Do you know what this summer has meant for me? Constant raptures over Schopenhauer and a whole series of spiritual delights which I've never experienced before. ... no student has ever studied so much on his course, and learned so much, as I have this summer"^[115]

[Richard Wagner](#), writing in his autobiography, remembered his first impression that Schopenhauer left on him (when he read *World as Will and Representation*):

Schopenhauer's book was never completely out of my mind, and by the following summer I had studied it from cover to cover four times. It had a radical influence on my whole life.^[116]

Wagner also commented on that "serious mood, which was trying to find ecstatic expression" created by Schopenhauer inspired the conception of *Tristan und Isolde*.^[117] See also [Influence of Schopenhauer on Tristan und Isolde](#).

[Friedrich Nietzsche](#) owed the awakening of his philosophical interest to reading *The World as Will and Representation* and admitted that he was one of the few philosophers that he respected, dedicating to him his essay *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*^[118] one of his [Untimely Meditations](#).

[Jorge Luis Borges](#) remarked that the reason he had never attempted to write a systematic account of his world view, despite his penchant for philosophy and metaphysics in particular, was because Schopenhauer had already written it for him.^[119]

As a teenager, [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#) adopted Schopenhauer's epistemological idealism. However, after his study of the philosophy of mathematics, he rejected epistemological idealism for [Gottlob Frege's](#) conceptual realism. In later years, Wittgenstein was highly dismissive of Schopenhauer, describing him as an ultimately "shallow" thinker: "Schopenhauer has quite a crude mind... where real depth starts, his comes to an end".^{[120][121]}

The philosopher [Gilbert Ryle](#) read Schopenhauer's works as a student, but later largely forgot them, only to unwittingly recycle ideas from Schopenhauer in his [The Concept of Mind](#).^[122]