

# SETTING AN AGENDA FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE THOUGHT OF ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER (1788-1860) IN CONTEMPORARY PSYCHIATRY, PSYCHOLOGY, AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

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## Summary

There is a growing interest in the German thinker Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), sometimes referred to as “the psychologist of the “will”, but scarce empirical research has been conducted on the relevance of his philosophy for psychology and psychiatry. Following his death, philosophers, psychologists, psychiatrists, artists, writers, and natural scientists commended him. However, he was harshly criticized by others, notably by Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger. Schopenhauer entitled his capital work as “The world as will and representation” (1818). His key concept is the “Will” which refers to the metaphysical source of all that exists. He considered deliberate human actions as a small part of the whole Will, which is mostly unconscious, blind, and purposeless. While the primeval Will is unknowable, the inner perception of our body in wishing is the closest approximation to the Will. Living beings have a “Representation” of the Will. With this construct, Schopenhauer explored most areas of knowledge in his time. The Will’s nature, conceived as a tendency or imperative to exist, unavoidably leads to normative self-centeredness in all living beings, and often to egoism and malice in humans. Notwithstanding, he envisioned a path for individual (but not collective) salvation based on aesthetic contemplation, compassion, and asceticism. After describing his text’s plan, we propose that selected contemporary constructs of psychotherapy may meet Schopenhauer’s path to individual salvation. This sets the basis for approaching Schopenhauer to standard and novel psychotherapeutic and psychoeducational tools, as we illustrate here in selected aspects of clinical cases. The psychological correlates of the Will as postulated by Schopenhauer, and the sharp prose by which he referred to human motivations, are his key contributions to contemporary psychotherapy and psychoeducation. Since Schopenhauer founded his thought on the natural sciences, it may also enrich the integrative trends in contemporary psychiatry and psychology.

**Keywords:** *austerity, cooperation, porcupine parable, self-centeredness, selflessness, self-knowledge, well-being.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer was born in Danzig, now Poland in 1788 and died in Frankfurt, Germany in 1860. He obtained his doctorate in philosophy in the University of Jena in 1813. Schopenhauer was extensively read in the second half of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century but thereafter was overlooked until the last three decades, which witnessed a growing interest in his work (Janaway 2010). Notwithstanding, few studies have been conducted so far in the mental health field (MHF), where his work is potentially valuable (Baptista 2016, Baptista et al. 2018).

Janaway (2010) considers Schopenhauer as ‘the most progressive post-Kantian, who yet, at the same time

undertook an ambitious global metaphysics of a conservative, pre-Kantian kind”. Accordingly, he searched for a general, non-theistic, naturalistic principle (metaphysics) underlying the whole universe and he named it “will” (Will for now on).

Schopenhauer’s notion of the Will, his insights on human psychology and his prose as shown in literal excerpts along this manuscript, maybe his main contributions to the MHF, and can be turned into psychotherapeutic tools. Specifically, Schopenhauer depicted a road to individual (but not collective) salvation through self-knowledge, contemplation, compassion, and asceticism (Schopenhauer 2010a, 2020).

We have discussed Schopenhauer’s key texts in contexts such as medical education (Baptista et al. 2018), cognitive psychology (Baptista & Aldana 2018), forensic science (Baptista et al. 2021), evolutionary medicine (Baptista et al. 2017, 2019), psychotherapy and clinical psychiatry (Baptista 2016, 2020).

Hence, after discussing Schopenhauer’s capital text, we describe his core concepts and relate them to selected current psychological dimensions and constructs.

Finally, we describe novel psychotherapeutic techniques derived from Schopenhauer’s thought that could be adapted to specific therapeutic procedures.

## OVERVIEW OF SCHOPENHAUER’S THOUGHT AND ITS IMPACT ON

### Early psychoanalysis

Schopenhauer entitled his *Magnus Opus*, published in 1818, as *The World as Will and Representation* (Schopenhauer 2010a) and added a complementary volume in 1844 (Schopenhauer 2020). Other key texts were *On the Will in Nature* (1936), his doctoral thesis, *The four-fold roots of the principle of sufficient reason* (PSR, 1813) (The project Gutenberg eBooks 1907), *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics* (1841) (Schopenhauer 2010b) and *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1851) (Schopenhauer 2013, 2014).

For Schopenhauer, the unitary world has two dimensions: the Will and the Representation (cognition) that we have of the Will. As a summary of the whole Schopenhauer’s work, Pilar López de Santa María (2016) stated that the objective of his project was ‘the self-knowledge of the Will’.

His capital text, *The World as Will and Representation* has four sections: 1) theory of knowledge; 2) metaphysics; 3) aesthetics; and 4) ethics. Schopenhauer’s approach has been either praised or severely criticized (Lovejoy 1911). For example, Heidegger (1961) and Young (2005) stated that Schopenhauer distorted Plato and Kant’s thoughts.

Sections 1, 3, and 4 represent disciplines of high current interest, but contemporary western intellectuals cast doubts on the relevance of any metaphysics (section 2).

### The Will (Schopenhauer 2010a, 2020)

The term “Will” is usually associated with consciousness, deliberation, purposefulness, virtue, and reasoning in religious, ethical, legal, and psychological traditions. Accordingly, it is an exclusively human feature.

This is not so for Schopenhauer, who conceive the ‘Will’ as the source of everything. It is a tendency or an

imperative to exist and/or live. It is the same in living and non-living objects as an amorphous and blind essence, which is out of time, space, individuality, and causality, and as such is directly imperceptible. The deliberative conceptions of the Will are thus, representational byproducts of the primeval Will.

Table 1 shows how the Will progressively displays itself and becomes visible (represented) as non-individualized minerals after the dimension of the Platonic Ideas. Individuation appears in animals and reaches its pinnacle in humans.

**Table 1** Levels\* of the two dimensions of the world according to Schopenhauer

Levels of the will	Levels of representation
• Primeval, unknowable dimension	No representation, by existing out of space, time, causality, and individuality
• Basic forces of nature (gravity, electricity, chemism).	
• Platonic Ideas or Forms**	
• Minerals	• Guided by causes
• Plants	• Guided by stimuli
• Animals	• Guided by motives
• Human beings	• Guided by abstract motives (concepts)

Adapted from Schopenhauer (2010a, 2020).

\* The term “levels” is clearly inadequate for describing a concept that is out of space, time, individuality, and causality as the primeval Will.

\*\* With the advent of the Platonic Ideas, the world as representation appears.

The reasoned and conscious human actions are but a minimal part of the Will, which is mostly unconscious. The intellect gradually develops and reaches its apex in humans, but it is subordinated to the Will as a representational dimension. For Julian Young (2005), one key purpose of Schopenhauer was to reduce the importance attributed to *reason* by rationalist philosophers. Schopenhauer chose the term “will” rather than “force”, to emphasize the subjective urge felt from within oneself (Atzert 2020).

The Will construct anticipated Freud’s concept of the unconscious. However, Schopenhauer’s primeval Will only “wills or not wills”, “its only fear is death” (Schopenhauer 2020, § 41, 485), and displays minimal or absent cognitive elaboration, whereas the psychoanalytic unconscious requires a complex set of cognitive procedures, for example, the defense mechanisms, introjected moral rules, and others. Schopenhauer’s Will to live surely influenced Freud in developing the defense

mechanisms and his life's drive concepts (Eros). Besides, the philosopher's conception of death, as an inherent dimension of the Will, also influenced Freud in developing his death drive (Thanatos) (Atzer, 2020).

### Representation (Schopenhauer 2010a, 2020)

According to Schopenhauer, living beings cannot perceive the Will as it really is, but have a Representation of the world in-itself (that is the Kantian *thing-in-itself*). The features of such a representation depend on the body configuration of every creature. Contrarily to the primordial Will which is out of space, time, individuality, and causality, the representational system, while derived from the Will, operates through the *Four-fold roots of the principle of sufficient reason* (PSR) (Schopenhauer 1907). The PSR states that everything has a reason (or cause): 1) becoming (causality), 2) cognition (logic), 3) being (existence in space and time), and (4) acting (moral and ethical issues). Epistemological confusion often arises from the improper use of the PRS. For example, Schopenhauer criticized applying logical rules (root 2) to prove the existence of God (root 4).

The Representational dimension also follows the so-called *principium individuationis* (Individuation Principle). It refers to the perception of individual things (living and non-livings) departing from a unitary Will. For Schopenhauer, the principle in question is that things are distinguished from one another by their position in space and time (Schopenhauer, 2010a).

As a summary of the Schopenhauer's project, the Will, as an imperative to exists, is the source of the animate and the inanimate. The primeval Will is unknowable, but during phylogeny, cognitive-related structures allow a representation of Will's expression through the PSR, which reaches its pinnacle in human beings.

## THE STRUCTURE OF SCHOPENHAUER'S CAPITAL WORK AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL AXIS FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PSYCHIATRISTS

Table 2 describes the four sections of *The World as will and representation*. File (A) shows the chapters' subtitles (A.1-4), which summarize the whole Schopenhauer's project. File (B) describes selected philosophical content and the psychological correlates of each section. File (C) describes Schopenhauer's ethics, which he considered

his most important contribution and the individual path to salvation. In the table 2 legend, we present selected excerpts of Schopenhauer's texts.

## OVERVIEW OF SCHOPENHAUER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONTEMPORARY MENTAL HEALTH FIELD

### Foundational concepts

- 1) *The Primeval Will* might be the most original Schopenhauer's contribution. The term 'Will denial' was an innovation, but it had already decanted from ethical, religious, and meditation traditions. The representational dimension is not an original contribution to the MHF's epistemology, but it is for psychotherapy, since Schopenhauer considered aesthetic contemplation as a Will-less, joyful, and peaceful state that bridged the Platonic Ideas, except for music. Concerning ethics, overcoming the *principium individuationis* (raising the Veil of Maya) might counteract the automatic tendency of considering fellows, and other creatures as aliens, and promote compassion.
- 2) We consider Schopenhauer's prose concerning humans' actions and motivations as his second foundational contributions to the MHF. As a young philosopher, he devoted fine lines to the genius, the artist and the mystic's mind, who momentarily become a pure subject of knowledge (representation) and frees himself from the Will's endless wishing. This is the ethical objective of *The World as Will and Representation*. But the "average" fellow and those with emotional disorders are, in general, far from this ideal state of freedom, and so the mature Schopenhauer wrote the parsimonious *Aphorisms for the Art of Living* (Schopenhauer 2014), devoted to those of us who navigate in a life-inherent, normative and default state of self-centeredness, which often turns into malice and rarely into compassion.
- 3) Schopenhauer's contribution to psychopathology development is small and general instead. He sharply speculated that madness was related to repression of painful memories, and anticipated what Freud later described as defense mechanisms. Hence, we will not focus on Schopenhauer impact on psychopathology and nosology, but on personality development and psychotherapy.

**Table 2** Philosophical and psychological correlates of the four sections of *The World as Will and Representation* text: the path for individual salvation

<b>Titles of the world as will and representation chapters</b>	<b>(A.1) The world as representation under the PSR: the object of experience and science*</b>	<b>(A.2) The world as will, first consideration: objectivation of the will**</b>	<b>(A.3) The world as representation independent of the PSR, second consideration***</b>	<b>(A.4) The world as will, second consideration: affirmation and negation of the will****</b>
<b>General philosophical and psychological issues</b>				
<b>Key philosophical/ psychological features.</b>	(B.1) We do not perceive the world as it really is. Primacy of the <i>principium individuationis</i> .	(B.2) The metaphysical will is blind and unsatiable. The intellect as a servant of the will.	(B.3) Contact with the Platonic Ideas and the unity of the universe through art and contemplation in general	(B.4) Will's denial
<b>Path for individual/ philosophical salvation</b>	(C.1) Acknowledging the similar essence of all living creatures	(C.2) Acknowledging endless wishing	(C.3) Raising the Veil of Māyā: emotional unity and respect for all the creatures.	(C.4) Compassion and asceticism

PRS = principle of sufficient reason.

Selected excerpts of every chapter: (\* to \*\*\*\*)

- \* *The world is my representation: this holds true for every living, cognitive being, although only a human being can bring it to abstract, reflective consciousness...*(Schopenhauer 2020, § 1: 23)
- \*\* *The will is...the innermost, the kernel of every individual thing and likewise of the whole: it appears in every blind operation of a force of nature: it also appears in deliberative human action; these differ from each other only in the grade of their appearing, not in the essence of what appears* (Schopenhauer 2010a § 21:135).
- \*\* *The will alone is everywhere completely itself. For its function is of the utmost simplicity; it consists in willing and not willing, which goes on with the greatest ease, without effort, and requires no practice* (Schopenhauer 2020 § 19: 419).
- \*\*\* *... there are two inseparable components of the aesthetic way of looking at things: cognition of the object, not as a particular thing but rather as a Platonic Idea, i.e. as a permanent form of this whole genus of things; and then the self-consciousness of the one who has this cognition, not as an individual, but as a pure, will-less subject of cognition* ( Schopenhauer 2010a § 38: 219) .
- \*\*\* *...until finally, in isolated cases, this cognition, clarified and intensified through suffering itself, reaches the point where it is no longer deceived by appearance, the veil of Māyā; it sees through the form of appearance, the principium individuationis, and the egoism that rests on this principle slowly dies away* (Schopenhauer 2010a, §51: 280).
- \*\*\* *The essence of this work has finally come to us in the Upanishads, which are the greatest gift of this century; it is expressed in many forms, but particularly when all the beings of the world, living and lifeless, are led in succession past the gaze of the disciples, while a certain word is pronounced over each of them, a word that has become a formula and as such is called Mahavakya: Tatoumes, or more correctly tat tvam asi, which means: 'You are that'* (Schopenhauer 2010a, § 63: 382].
- \*\*\*\* *The only thing that goodness, love, and nobility can do for other people is alleviate their suffering, and consequently, the only thing that can ever move them to perform good deeds and works of charity is the cognition of other people's suffering, which is immediately intelligible from one's own suffering and the two are considered the same. From this, however, it follows that the nature of pure love is compassion – compassion that alleviates the suffering that belongs to every unsatisfied desire, be it great or small* (Schopenhauer 2010a § 67: 402).



## Schopenhauer and personality development

Schopenhauer described three dimensions of character (personality in current terms):

a) The *intelligible* character is the Will as *thing-in-itself* as it appears in an individual in a definite grade, outside time, and space, indivisible and unchangeable. There are no differences in the degrees of Will's among individuals; differences pertain to the Will's excitability. However, within a person life's span, the Will does not change:

*The will never tires, never grows old, never learns, never improves by practice, is in infancy what it is in old age, eternally one and the same, and its character in each individual is unchangeable (Schopenhauer, 1907, § 2, on p. 247).*

Schopenhauer asserted that every man is a Platonic Idea. This intriguing statement has received little attention within the philosopher's body of knowledge.

b) The *empirical* character, also unchangeable, is not known *a priori* (before), but *a posteriori* (after) by observing one's own behavior along time.

c) The *acquired* character refers to the insight developed by observing one's empirical character along time, particularly the own and others' suffering. Self-knowledge may change *behavior* by modifying the motives that the Will pursues. The genius, the talented artist, and the mystic as pure subjects of knowledge, transit a clearer path for Will' denial than most humans, and transitorily access a joyful and peaceful psychological state.

As a final comment concerning personality, Schopenhauer considered that absolute individual free will does not exist, and that all human actions are somehow predetermined when analyzed through the PSR (Schopenhauer 2010b). A detailed analysis of this important topic is out of this manuscript's scope, but we will extend this issue when discussing script analysis below.

## Overview of Schopenhauer thought and contemporary psychotherapy

Self-knowledge of the Will and Will's denial are the ethical objectives of Schopenhauer's thought. This is the so-called Schopenhauerian path for individual salvation, which comprises:

- 1) Flexibility to interact with the PSR and with the *principium individuationis*.
- 2) Amenability to raise the Veil of Māyā and perceive the unity of the universe and creatures.

- 3) Development of compassion (cooperativeness) and asceticism (healthy austerity) (Baptista 2016).

In this regard, Peter Sloterdijk (2013, 64) stated that "*Schopenhauer's doctrine of the resignation of the Will (compassion and asceticism) must sound even stranger to the hunger for life among the inhabitants of the First World today than it would have to Schopenhauer's contemporaries*". Aesthetic contemplation and compassion are core issues in the search for well-being, but it is not the case for asceticism, particularly concerning sexuality. Psychotherapy often leads to an emotional and cognitive reorganization departing from what Young (2005) defines as "natural state", that is under the unrevised Will to live affirmation. Schopenhauer described such a 'natural state' as follows:

*Egoism is such a deeply rooted trait of all individuality in general that egoistic goals are the only ones that can be relied upon to arise an individual being into action. (Schopenhauer 2020, § 41, 554).*

Consequently, Schopenhauer did not propose a social project, even at a small scale. That is why we insist in his claim for "individual" salvation. This is perhaps one of the reasons why he is discredited when pertaining social organization and collective projects.

Hence, which might be a bridge between Schopenhauer's commandments and contemporary psychotherapy?

One approach is Evolutionary Psychology, which is a core subject in current science (Pinker 1997, Jonason & Schmitt, 2016), and analyzes motivation in terms of gene's successful replication. The evolutionary field addresses Schopenhauer's springs for human motivation (egoism, compassion, and malice) in contemporary constructs defined as opposite dyads such as altruism/egoism; cooperation/defeat, such as in Game Theory; reciprocal altruism/pure altruism, (Vlerick 2020); and pathological altruism/healthy selfishness (Kaufman & Jauk 2020).

Concerning the dynamics altruism vs. egoism, Schopenhauer conceived self-centeredness (egoism) as the default attitude of humans. A healthy and absolute Will-denial state is realistically uncommon, therefore is not the goal of standard psychotherapy. However, mild to moderate degree of Will-denial under specific and relevant circumstances is an unavoidable condition for fair social interaction, and its often a desirable outcome in psychotherapy.

Schopenhauer' thought thus, may complement specific psychotherapeutic techniques by:

- 1) Providing a philosophical explanation of the power and omnipresence of desires arising from the primeval

Will, that while a metaphysical construct, is ostensible when we perceive our body in all its functioning:

...my body and my will are one...what I call my body, I call my will...besides being my representation, my body is also my will...(Schopenhauer 2010a, § 18, 127)

- 2) Describing such an endless wishing with an original and challenging prose, which may promote self-knowledge, humility when pertinent, and cooperation.

Since we will focus on Schopenhauer and psychotherapy, in the next section we will first describe how three contemporary models of personality link to Schopenhauer's thought: the big five personality factors, Cloninger model of personality and Berne script analysis (Table 3). Second, we will describe selected constructs for the assessment of psychological dimensions that may modulate Schopenhauer's path to individual salvation: cognitive distortions, self-centeredness, and selflessness (Table 4). Thirdly, we will mention standard psychotherapy techniques that connect to the Schopenhauerian spirit, and fourthly, we will propose novel psychotherapeutic tools directly derived from the philosopher's work (Table 4).

To follow the plan of this essay it is central to refer to the four chapters of the *World as will and representation* (Schopenhauer 2010a) (Table II). Chapters 1 and 2 describes the mind working in a default cognitive mode of non-awareness of the unity of phenomena (chapter 1) and the unrevised Will to live (chapter 2). The next two chapters set the basis for Will-denial and individual salvation.

### Contemporary models of personality, assessment of related constructs, psychotherapy, and Schopenhauer's thought (Table 3)

#### Contemporary models of personality

This section refers to standard models of personality, whose foundational terms appear close to Schopenhauer's prose and ethics and may thus be used in future research programs.

#### Five-factor model of personality (Goldberg 1990)

It captures most basic individual differences in personality: neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness. We hypothesize that:

- High neuroticism levels may decrease the flexibility to navigate the PSR and the *principium individuationis*.

**Table 3** The world as will and representation and correlated psychological constructs of Schopenhauer's path for individual salvation

Schopenhauer's concepts	(A.1) The world as representation under the FRPSF: the object of experience and science	(A.2) The world as will, first consideration: objectivation of the will	(A.3) The world as representation independent of the FRPSR, second consideration	(A.4) The world as will, second consideration: affirmation and negation of the will
<b>Psychological evaluation *</b>				
<b>Personality traits needing specific attention in each dimension</b> (Goldberg 1990).	↑ Neuroticism	↓ Conscientiousness ↓ Agreeableness	↓ Openness	↓ Conscientiousness ↓ Agreeableness ↓ Openness
<b>Character domains needing specific attention in critical dimensions</b> (Cloninger 1987).	-	↓ Self-direction ↓ Cooperativeness ↓ Self-transcendence		
<b>Script analysis dimensions</b> (Berne 2015)	Failures in developing an optimal integrative, Adult-ego state, that harmonizes the needs and requests of the Parent and Child ego states.			

See text for further explanation. A1-A4 refer to the titles and subtitles of the four chapters of *The world as will and representation* (Schopenhauer 2010a, 2020).

\*The arrow direction symbolizes an "impediment" for transiting the Schopenhauer's path to individual salvation.

- Low conscientiousness and agreeableness levels may increase self-centeredness.
- Low openness levels may prevent raising the Veil of Māyā.
- Low conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness may prevent the development of compassion and asceticism.

### **Cloninger's character dimensions (Cloninger 1987)**

This construct comprises three dimensions: self-directedness, cooperativeness, and self-transcendence.

Self-directedness conceives the self as an autonomous individual. Cooperativeness is an integral part of humanity or society, being a source of feelings of community, compassion, conscience, and charity. Self-transcendence refers to the self as an integral part of the universe and its basis. Self-transcendence and cooperativeness have some analogy with the raising the veil of Maya and compassion in Schopenhauer's path to salvation.

Our working hypothesis is that low levels of the three character's dimensions, particularly cooperativeness and self-transcendence, hinder raising the Veil of Māyā and having 'access' to compassion (collaboration) and asceticism (healthy austerity).

### **Transactional analysis (script analysis) (Berne 2015)**

It has its roots in classical psychoanalysis and in Alfred Adler's work, among many other authors. Its central feature is life script, which refers to a complex set of emotions, behaviors and cognitions that are organized around the first five years of life, and when dysfunctional, determine a stereotyped pattern of inter-personal interactions (transactions), metaphorically described as 'games'. The script is analyzed under the construct of three selfstates which partially resemble the classical psychoanalytical dimensions: the parent-like (superego), child-like (Id), and adult-like (ego) states, which differ in their cognitive or representational modes. Emotional growth implies developing an integrative adult-like state, which might be better suited for cooperation and healthy austerity.

Schopenhauer's intelligible and empirical characters correlate with the unrevised life script construct, whereas the acquired character parallels the script changes after relevant life experiences and psychotherapy. The rationale of including script analysis is that the self-knowledge of the individual Will might have positive impacts in the script reformulation and adjustment mediated by the integrative adult-like state. The following Schopenhauer's text may paraphrase the rigidity of the individual unrevised individual script:

*...the human being always does what he wills, and indeed, he does it necessarily. However, this depends on the fact that he already is what he wills: for from that which he is everything that he ever does follows of necessity. (Schopenhauer, 2010b, § 5, 116).*

The Transactional Analysis addresses the individual script with diverse procedures. A standard technique is called 'egogram recording' where the patient registers which dimension of his/her ego states is more salient in specific situations. This improves awareness for prevention, early detection, and modification of dysfunctional facets of his/her script. We will propose below a similar technique for 'Will' recording.

### **Assessment of psychological constructs modulating Schopenhauer's path to salvation (Tables 3 and 4)**

Significant levels of negative emotions (Baptista et al 2020), obsessions, compulsions, paranoid and evasive reasoning, which correlate with a misuse of the PSR and *the principium individuationis*, may hinder prosocial behaviors. Hence, the representational mode of the unrevised mind may be evaluated with the cognitive distortions' construct (Beck & Beck 2021).

The altruism/egoism dimension may be assessed with the Cloninger's self-transcendence scale, the self-centeredness/ selflessness (Dambrium 2017), and the healthy selfishness/pathological altruism constructs (Kaufman & Jauk 2020) among many others.

### **Psychotherapeutic techniques (Table 4)**

Psychotherapy schools, while differing in their theoretical background and practice, plausibly meet Schopenhauer's path to individual salvation at some point. An *ad hoc* description of the main psychotherapy schools is out of our scope. We selected techniques that closely resemble Schopenhauer's lexis and may set the basis for more specific exploratory and interventional studies. Relevant examples are cognitive-behavioral therapy (Beck & Beck 2021), script transactional analysis (Berne 2015), imagination techniques, meditation, mindfulness, art therapy (Hogan 2011, Garcia-Campayo et al. 2021), and compassion therapy (Gilbert 2014). Gestalt psychology's principles (Wagemans et al. 2016) also have a heuristic practical resemblance to Schopenhauer's thought, in the sense that a given phenomenon that momentary becomes the object of our representational capacity (the figure), emerges from an amorphous background (a remote proxy of the primeval Will), only to submerge again and be substituted by another figure (s) (see the example of the emerging bubbles below).

**Table 4** The world as will and representation, evaluation of psychological constructs that deviate from Schopenhauer's path to salvation and associated psychotherapeutic interventions.

Schopenhauer's concepts	(A.1) The world as representation under the FRPSF: the object of experience and science	(A.2) The world as will, first consideration: objectivation of the will	(A.3) The world as representation independent of the FRPSR, second consideration	(A.4) The world as will, second consideration: affirmation and negation of the will
<b>Psychological constructs underlying psychotherapy to be evaluated and addressed.</b>	Cognitive distortions (Beck & Beck 2021)	Self-centeredness (Dambrum, 2017) Selflessness		
<b>Specific psychotherapeutic techniques</b>	Cognitive behavioral psychotherapy (Beck & Beck 2021) Transactional analysis (Berne 2015)	The line of life (Berne 2015) Imagination techniques, meditation, mindfulness (Garcia-Campayo et al. 2021) Art therapy (Hoga 2001) Compassion therapy (Gilbert 2014) The Willgram* Emerging bubbles: 1 x 10 (addresses the insatiability of the Will) * The porcupine parable (addresses social interaction) * The triangle of human motivations (globally addresses ethics) *		

A1-A4 refer to the titles and subtitles of the four chapter of *The world as will and representation* (Schopenhauer 2010a, 2020).

(\*) = Novel proposals from the authors (see text).

### Novel Schopenhauerian psychotherapy techniques

We here describe one monitoring and two imaginative techniques that illustrate Schopenhauer's insights on human psychology. They do not intend to approach any specific symptom or disorder, but to promote a general insight on the Will's self-centeredness imperative. Therapists may use these images to improve coping strategies to patient's emotions, cognitions, and attitudes towards others within the context of their specific model of psychotherapy.

#### Monitoring the Will: the Willgram

The rationale is being aware in real time, or when retrieving relevant events, of the flow of wishes, requirements, demands, etc., and meets Schopenhauer when he asserted that:

*...a human being is immediately conscious of his (or her) own self...entirely as something that Wills (Cited by Atzer, 2020, 499).*

In this procedure, consecutive and/or simultaneous, simple, or complex desires are registered and discussed when feasible, during individual or group therapy. But we

must insist that it is unconceivable so far, a test for a direct psychological assessment of the primeval Will, which is inherently unknowable in Schopenhauer's thought.

**Emerging bubbles, 1 x 10:** every wish that is satisfied is a bubble. As soon as that satisfied wish appears, ten more bubbles of unsatisfied wishes will float.

*...but for every wish that is fulfilled, at least ten are left denied... Schopenhauer 2010, 9, § 38: 219].*

*...because a man's happiness in terms of what he owns and not what he would like to have is as futile as trying to express a fraction only that only has a numerator and no denominator (Schopenhauer 2014, § 3: 277).*

This simple, but meaningful and dynamic image aims at:

- 1) Promoting insight about the insatiability of the Will in oneself and in all the others.
- 2) Developing preventive strategies for disappointment and boredom.
- 3) Promote insight and a healthy balance between what one has and what one wants.



**We, the porcupines:** this is based on one of the most popular Schopenhauer's texts. How we hurt each other with our words and actions when our 'squills' raise, and how empathy and solidarity may show when they level off.

*A number of porcupines huddled together for warmth on a cold day in winter; but, as they began to prick one another with their quills, they were obliged to disperse. However, the cold drove them together again, when just the same thing happened . . . In the same way, the need of society drives the human porcupines together; only to be mutually repelled by the many prickly and disagreeable qualities of their nature. (Schopenhauer 2015, 31, § 396).*

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Labelling Schopenhauer as 'pessimist' has hindered the investigation of the heuristic potential of his thought in the mental health field, particularly in psychotherapy.

Considering the optimism/pessimism spectrum, psychoanalysis, cognitive-behavioral, and humanistic psychotherapies, tend to be neutral. 'Positive psychology' enriched psychotherapy, but it may overemphasize selfless prosocial features and undersize Schopenhauer's self-centeredness and other models of mental development and performance (Pinker 1997, 2002). In real-world psychotherapy and psychoeducation, we probably depart from a mixture of both existential positions, but self-centeredness is not explicitly addressed. Research may clarify which patients benefit from each position and the optimal timing. Sloterdick (2013) statement that *'the philosophy one chooses depends on the kind of person one is'* sharply illustrates this topic.

We propose that Schopenhauer's most original contributions to the MHF is the notion of a primeval Will whose servant is the intellect. Other conceptions of the Will such as the psychoanalytic unconscious, self-direction (Cloninger 1987), Nietzsche's (Stern 2020) and Adler's Will to power (Adler 1917), and Frankl's Will of meaning (1959) imply sophisticated cognitive elaboration, which is not the case for Schopenhauer's Will.

In contemporary thinking, a proxy to the psychological Will might be the summatory/mixing of a myriad of mostly unconscious physical, chemical, physiological, psychological, and social processes. The output would be a pool of constantly changing and often contradictory wishing, ranging from unconscious to amorphous subconscious sensations, to elemental desires, up to sophisticated reasoning. The ethological description (Will-gram) of motivations may provide a frame of reference for

organizing such a complex flow of wishes, which inherently changes with age, gender, health and culture, nurturing and raising children, scholar, work and economic achievements, romantic relationships, social and family network, physical and mental health, hierarchy, search, maintenance and grieving from power's positions, religious faith, guilt, intellectual and transcendental issues, etc., (Baptista & Aldana 2018).

The Will-gram, the '1 x 10 emerging bubbles' and the 'porcupine fable' imagination techniques are just but examples of psychological Will's expressions that may be incorporated into specific psychotherapeutic constructs as an 'accompanying inner voice'.

## CRITICISMS

Turning complex philosophical concepts into operational psychotherapeutic techniques implies the risk of deforming the original propositions, especially if they belong to radically different epochs. Hence, we summarize and intend to answer here several key criticisms:

- 1) The Will is in Schopenhauer a metaphysical construct closely related to the Kantian *thing-in-itself*, which is inaccessible to human cognition. Hence, how can it be an issue in current psychotherapy and psychoeducation? Schopenhauer answered that the perception of our body wishing is the closest and heuristic approximation to the primeval Will (Baptista & Aldana, 2018, Schopenhauer 2010a, 2020). In this context, the metaphysical Will becomes an actual psychological Will.
- 2) Schopenhauer acknowledged that Will-denial cannot be purposefully planned and achieved but is a sort of "grace" or "illumination" in the Christian and Hindu sense, respectively. In its purest form thus, an enduring Schopenhauer's individual state of salvation may be suitable or even conceivable for few people. In daily life, however, compassion often follows own suffering and/or by appropriating others' suffering (Ribeiro 2016). Hence, for practical psychotherapy and psychoeducation, we rephrased Schopenhauer's goals as "cooperativeness and healthy austerity" (Baptista 2016, Baptista et al. 2018).
- 3) Schopenhauer's emphasis in compassion was criticized by Nietzsche, who conceived it as a sort of power exertion and downsized the value of the compassion's receptor. Stern (2020) argued that Nietzsche's criticisms are directed towards acts of pity (that have a negative evaluation of the pitied one), which is not the case in Schopenhauer's thought. Stern emphasized that the German language uses the same word

for 'pity' and 'compassion', which is not the case in English or Spanish. In a related sense, Schopenhauer's thought is often defined as "pessimistic" and depicted as a massive "no" to life and contrasted with a "yes to life" attributed to Nietzsche. We think that these comparisons have not been properly studied from the psychological perspective. It deserves a deep analysis which is out of the scope of the present essay.

- 4) Schopenhauer's Will conception leads us to the status of any metaphysics in contemporary western societies. As an example, Nietzsche, as interpreted by Martin Heidegger (1961) *inverted* metaphysics, that is, before him, the real world was the suprasensible (the metaphysics), whereas the sensible dimension (how we perceive the world in a *natural* state) was at most a representation of the ultimate essence. Nietzsche inverted these terms, and for him the real is the sensible (and in an important switch, the suprasensible *comes* from the sensible).

Schopenhauer appears to smoothly move between inverted and non-inverted metaphysics (Baptista & Aldana, 2018). While he denotes the ultimate reality as the Kantian *thing-in-itself*, the physical body and its wishing is the embodied Will. Hence, strictly speaking, the sensible and nonsensible dimensions are but the same reality. We believe this is one of the reasons why Schopenhauer is attractive to many contemporary readers. In fact, existentialism-oriented therapy (Molnar 2024) may benefit from Schopenhauer's insights.

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## CONCLUSIONS

Wishing' as a proxy for the primeval Will, and the creative Schopenhauer's prose, may be empirically assessed in the search of additional tools in contemporary psychotherapy and psychoeducation (Baptista et al. 2018).

Most psychotherapies implicitly comprise the issue of the Will-related endless wishing, but the rather simple proposed techniques may optimize such an insight.

Finally, by having based his whole project on the natural sciences (Baptista & Aldana, 2018, Baptista et al 2019), Schopenhauer's work is also consonant with the integrative spirit of contemporary psychiatry and psychology (Baptista 1995).

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