

‘A Complete Negation of the Will to Live’: A Phenomenological Evaluation of Schopenhauer’s Quietism


Vadim Gershteyn

Alma Mater Europaea University, Slovenia

University of Illinois-Chicago, USA

DePaul University, USA

vadim.gershteyn@gmail.com

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Abstract. The author examines Arthur Schopenhauer’s concept of quietism: a philosophical stance that advocates detachment and negation of the will-to-live, as outlined in Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* (1969). Schopenhauer, influenced by a Vedic philosophy that emphasizes ontological pessimism, perceives life as marked by suffering due to the will’s ceaseless striving. His ethical response to suffering, quietism, advocates withdrawal and stillness to transcend suffering. Employing a phenomenological approach, this author evaluates quietism in light of contemporary trauma research and psychological evidence, alongside Friedrich Nietzsche’s critique of Schopenhauer. Findings from mindfulness and exposure therapy studies suggest that complete withdrawal is unsustainable and detrimental to psychological well-being, which is contrasted with Schopenhauer’s radical negation of the will. Nietzsche’s philosophy of the will to power, though born from Schopenhauer’s Vedic-inspired ontology, emphasizes engagement with one’s suffering-filled life and transformation through it, thereby presenting a more dynamic, life-affirming alternative to Schopenhauer’s pessimistic withdrawal. The author concludes that while Schopenhauer’s insights into suffering are profound, his quietism is incomplete, thereby necessitating integration with active engagement and ethical responsibility to address human challenges effectively.

Key Words: Schopenhauer, quietism, phenomenology, will-to-live, Nietzsche, will to power, trauma, suffering

»Popolna negacija volje do življenja«: fenomenološka ocena Schopenhauerjevega kvietizma

Povzetek. Avtor preučuje Schopenhauerjev koncept kvietizma: filozofsko stališče, ki zagovarja odmaknjenost in zanikanje volje do življe-

nja, kot je opisano v Schopenhauerjevem delu *Svet kot volja in predstava* (2008). Schopenhauer, na katerega je vplivala vedska filozofija, ki poudarja ontološki pesimizem, življenje dojema kot zaznamovano s trpljenjem zaradi nenehnega prizadevanja volje. Njegov etični odziv na trpljenje, kvietizem, zagovarja umik in mirnost za preseganje trpljenja. Avtor s fenomenološkim pristopom ocenjuje kvietizem v luči sodobnih raziskav travme in psiholoških dokazov ter Nietzschejevo kritiko Schopenhauerja. Ugotovitve študij čuječnosti in terapije izpostavljenosti kažejo, da je popoln umik nevzdržen in škodljiv za psihično dobro počutje, kar je v nasprotju s Schopenhauerjevim radikalnim zanikanjem volje. Nietzschejeva filozofija volje do moči, čeprav izhaja iz Schopenhauerjeve vedsko navdihnjene ontologije, poudarja vključevanje v lastno življenje, polno trpljenja, in preobrazbo skozi to, s čimer predstavlja dinamičnejšo, življenjsko potrjujočo alternativo Schopenhauerjevemu pesimističnemu umiku. Avtor zaključuje, da so Schopenhauerjevi vpogledi v trpljenje sicer globoki, vendar je njegov kvietizem nepopoln, zato je za učinkovito reševanje človeških izzivov potrebna integracija aktivnega vključevanja in etične odgovornosti.

Ključne besede: Schopenhauer, kvietizem, fenomenologija, volja do življenja, Nietzsche, volja do moči, travma, trpljenje

Introduction

A typical response to trauma is to 'clam up' or to shy away from further engagement with the source of pain (Bremner 2007). Evidence shows that this is an insufficient way to deal with trauma, and that some degree of exposure to the source of pain is optimal for healthy recovery from trauma (McLean and Foa 2011; Olasov Rothbaum and Schwartz 2002). Arthur Schopenhauer's ontology, while among the most brilliant ever espoused – and one that is not aimed at promoting health as such¹ – rests on a pragmatic misunderstanding of the way human beings adequately deal

¹ A pragmatist philosophy, which is concerned about the measurable effects of actions in the world, is naturally concerned about psychological well-being. While there are traces of this concern in Peirce (1955), the importance of human well-being to philosophy is central to James (2000) and Dewey (1981). Schopenhauer, not being a pragmatist in the way meant by these later thinkers, is unconcerned about promoting or even encapsulating well-being in his writings; the degree to which he even believes in such a concept as well-being is doubtful. Schopenhauer views the world as basically evil and, to use his follower Philipp Mainländer's (2018) term, 'worthless.' Schopenhauer is attempting to describe the world as he sees it; the psychological effects of his description, which led two of his most ardent followers to commit suicide, are an unimportant, if not an acceptable outcome to a sadistic personality, which Schopenhauer may or may not have had.

with trauma, a deficiency that was taken up by Friedrich Nietzsche in his critiques of Schopenhauer. This author outlines Schopenhauer's ontology of quietism and critiques it in favour of Nietzsche's will-to-power and a pragmatist epistemology more broadly using the methodology of phenomenology.

Defining Schopenhauer's Quietism

Quietism can be defined as the ethical and philosophical stance of withdrawing from the striving of life by embracing detachment and stillness as a means to transcend suffering and the bondage of the will (Schopenhauer 1969). While quietism is associated with the thought of Samuel Beckett, who coins the term, it is Schopenhauer who systematizes the logic of quietism in his *The World as Will and Representation*, borrowing substantially from Vedic thought. Defined this way, quietism is a psychological defence mechanism in people akin to 'shying away': a withdrawal from the overwhelming force of suffering to prevent further harm. Evidence has shown that shying away is an insufficient means to deal with trauma (McLean and Foa 2011; Olatov Rothbaum and Schwartz 2002). Entire therapeutic protocols, namely exposure therapy, rest on the assumption that one ought not to shy away from the sufferings of the world.

For Schopenhauer, shying away does not result from specific traumatic events but is rather a microcosm of the broader trauma of life itself. Life, for Schopenhauer (1969), is a trauma inherently marked by suffering – the ceaseless striving of the will and the endless cycle of desire and dissatisfaction. An individual's retreat into silence or avoidance mirrors the existential realization that the very act of willing is a source of pain. He writes, 'That continual deception and disillusionment, as well as the general nature of life, present themselves as intended and calculated to awaken the conviction that nothing whatever is worth our exertions, our efforts, and our struggles, that all good things are empty and fleeting, that the world on all sides is bankrupt, and that life is a business that does not cover the costs; so that our will may turn away from it' (Schopenhauer 1969, 574).

To repeat, to shy away, for Schopenhauer, is not a response to isolated moments of hardship but a reflection of the deeper existential trauma of existence as the bondage of the will. And, an individual's withdrawal is a turning away from the incessant striving of life and a movement toward stillness, detachment, and the negation of the will through asceticism (or quietism). Schopenhauer's quietism comes from his metaphysical understanding of the world as a manifestation of will, which he sees as the blind,

insatiable force driving all existence. For Schopenhauer, the will is the source of suffering because it perpetually strives and never reaches satisfaction, akin to the concept of *jouissance* from Jacques Lacan (2006), who puts Schopenhauer's notion in a psychoanalytic framework wherein too much pleasure 'feels bad.' The phenomenological experience of this striving is one of constant tension, frustration, and transient relief. Schopenhauer (1969, p. 196) writes, 'All willing springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering. Fulfilment brings this to an end; yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied.' Human life, as it is a manifestation of will like all other forms of life (and the non-living universe generally), is trapped in an endless cycle of desire and inability to satisfy desire, making suffering an inescapable aspect of existence. Quietism, then, is Schopenhauer's ethical response to this pessimistic insight – a call to renounce the will, to cease striving, and to cultivate detachment from the desires that bind us to suffering.

A phenomenology of shying away involves one's realization that willing for the ephemeral, which is the only type of willing that can take place, is futile. Schopenhauer (1969) describes this transition as the point where one recognizes the 'nothingness' of individual acts, realizing them as a mirror of the greater futility of existence itself. This recognition is not merely intellectual but existential: one has a lived experience of profound disillusionment. He writes: 'the transition that is possible, but to be regarded only as an exception, from the common knowledge of particular things to knowledge of the Idea takes place suddenly, since knowledge tears itself free from the service of the will precisely by the subject's ceasing to be merely individual, and being now a pure will-less subject of knowledge. Such a subject of knowledge no longer follows relations in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason; on the contrary, it rests in fixed contemplation of the object presented to it out of its connexion with any other, and rises into this' (Schopenhauer 1969, p. 178). In this moment of detachment, an individual no longer identifies with the will but instead attains a state of contemplative stillness. Quietism is both a denial of life and a gnostic-like acceptance of its deeper reality – one that transcends the ceaseless turmoil of the will. Schopenhauer's affinity to Vedic philosophy is apparent here, since his recommendation to the sufferer reading *The World As Will and Representation*, to avoid suffering, is one that is found among many non-Tantric sages: shy away from the world, and 'unite Atman with Brahman.' The question that is begged in this union, that of Atman with Brahman, is why a force representing

the universal individual, namely Atman, would consider it beneficial to unify with an evil (according to Schopenhauer and non-Tantric Vedantic thought) force, as represented by Brahman, given that Brahman is the expression of a world whose only constant is that of suffering.²

Schopenhauer's quietist phenomenology continues with an individual transitioning from being driven by the will to adopting a state of will-less contemplation: a condition Schopenhauer likens to an aesthescetic³ experience. The phenomenological shift here is such: instead of perceiving the world through the lens of personal desire and striving, an individual perceives it as a pure subject of knowledge – detached from the ego and its incessant demands. Schopenhauer (1969, pp. 178–179) explains,

We lose ourselves entirely in this object, to use a pregnant expression; in other words, we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object, so that it is as though the object alone existed without anyone to perceive it, and thus we are no longer able to separate the perceiver from the perception, but the two have become one.

This experience liberates a person from the tyranny of the will, albeit temporarily, by allowing them to encounter the world not as a field of struggle but as an object of serene contemplation. The 'quiet' referred to in this passage is meant not as a shunning of unpleasant noise but more fundamentally a suspension of all striving – a phenomenological shift from turbulence to quietude through ascetic practices.

The stillness one gets from asceticism, however, is fragile and fleeting when rooted solely in aesthetics; namely, when it is aesthescetical. Schopenhauer acknowledges that the aesthescetic state provides only a momentary respite from the will. True liberation, in his view, demands a

² The question that is begged in this union, that of Atman with Brahman, is why a force representing the universal individual, namely Atman, would consider it beneficial to unify with an evil (according to Schopenhauer and non-Tantric Vedantic thought) force, as represented by Brahman, given that Brahman is the expression of a world whose only constant is that of suffering.

³ The terms 'ascetic' and 'aesthetic' may seem linguistically similar, but they represent distinct concepts. 'Ascetic' pertains to a life of withdrawal from worldly pleasures and indulgences, often for spiritual reasons, while 'aesthetic' relates to the appreciation and understanding of beauty and art. Peirce (1955) argues that ethics is a subset of aesthetics, meaning what is ethical is dependent on what pleases human beings (this is a thesis that was also put forward by Nietzsche). Taking Peirce (and Nietzsche)'s insight, the two words are indeed related. 'Aesthescetic,' a neologism introduced here, refers to a shying away or a negation of the will to live that is brought about by good art, especially music.

more radical transformation: *the complete negation of the will-to-live*. He describes this as a profound ethical quietism, where the individual arrives at a state of resignation, or what he calls denial of the will. Phenomenologically, this entails a shift from identifying with the striving, suffering individual to embracing a universal perspective that transcends individuality altogether in favour of something like non-existence. He writes, ‘We freely acknowledge that what remains after the complete abolition of the will is, for all who are still full of the will, assuredly nothing. But also conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and denied itself, this very real world of ours with all its suns and galaxies, is – nothing’ (Schopenhauer 1969, 411–412). ‘Nothing,’ to repeat, is a state of freedom from suffering where an individual no longer participates in the endless striving of existence. In this sense, Schopenhauer’s quietism is a radical way of living that seeks not to conquer or master existence but to negate the very drive that sustains it.⁴

One crucial clarification has to be made here, particularly in view of comparative research with Indian philosophical traditions: Schopenhauer, like Nietzsche following him, does not clearly separate will from desire. Often replaced with human striving and longing, the will serves as a metaphysical drive and psychological force for both philosophers. But many Vedic and Buddhist systems reject this conflating of ideas. Renunciation targets desire (*kāma*), which is indeed the egoic, grasping force that ties people to illusion (*māyā*). But in the sense of disciplined

⁴ The question of why not to end one’s existence if life is so futile, worthless, or both occurs to Schopenhauer. He responds by rejecting suicide as a valid solution to life’s suffering. For Schopenhauer (1969), suicide is not a denial of the will to live but rather an affirmation of it (perhaps suggesting that one kills oneself because they ‘care too much’ or ‘want to live so badly’). He argues that suicide arises from a desire to escape specific pains and frustrations within life, rather than a true renunciation of life itself or the will to exist. Schopenhauer contends that the real solution lies in the philosophical and ethical practice of denying the will to live – not by destroying the body, but by overcoming the desires and attachments that bind us to the world. Through asceticism, self-denial, and a profound detachment from worldly pleasures and ambitions, Schopenhauer claims that one can achieve a transcendence of the will and, ultimately, liberation from suffering. This, for this author, is a highly unsatisfying response to the question of suicide, what Camus (1991) calls (wrongly) the most important problem of philosophy (the most important problem of philosophy is solipsism). As already alluded to, two of Schopenhauer’s followers, Weininger and Mainländer, did not heed their master’s call to do no damage to their bodies in pursuit of an end to suffering. Weil, who is alleged to have been reading *The World as Will and Representation* when she starved herself to death, can be viewed as the third ‘victim’ of Schopenhauer.

resolve or directed intentionality, it is not always considered as a flaw (Bratoeva 2024; Leach 2021). Beyond this, as part of the very road toward emancipation (*mokṣa* or *nirvāṣa*), it is typically fostered and improved by means of yoga, meditation, and ethical observance (*śīla*) (Ben-David 2024; MacKenzie 2018). Where Schopenhauer advocates a total negation of the will, Indian traditions more typically recommend a change or purification of intentionality – not a philosophical retreat from all willing, but a redirection of volitional energy toward non-attachment and understanding.

This distinction has quite important consequences. The analogy presented in this paper holds if one sees Schopenhauer's rejection of the will as equivalent with the Buddhist or Vedic objective of transcending desire. If will is considered more broadly – as a capacity for deliberate, steady direction – it is false to assert that these traditions support its annihilation. Schopenhauer's mistake, then, is more in his philosophical absolutism than in his diagnosis of suffering. He casts the pathology of desire onto the whole framework of willing, therefore excluding the prospect that a will developed by discipline could be used as a vehicle for emancipation rather than bondage. Schopenhauer's insights on suffering can be preserved by a phenomenological interpretation attentive to this difference, therefore avoiding the totalizing implications he and some of his interpreters have reached.

Empirical Evidence For and Against Quietism

The question of whether shying away or withdrawing from the world effectively helps one cope with suffering has been the subject of both philosophical and empirical inquiry. Schopenhauer's quietism posits that detachment from the world and its restless striving offers a way to transcend suffering, as the constant demands of the will are the root of human distress. However, evidence from psychology paints a decidedly different story: while withdrawal may provide temporary relief to a sufferer, it is not a sustainable means for coping with the sufferings of the world (McLean and Foa 2011; Olasov Rothbaum and Schwartz 2002).⁵ Instead, a balance between engagement and detachment may be more conducive

⁵ It may be objectionable to compare philosophy and psychology as domains or to use psychological research to bolster philosophical claims. Indeed, there is a replication crisis in psychology and other sciences (Wiggins and Christophersen 2019). It follows that it may not be pertinent to use psychological data to evaluate philosophical statements; or this may be more reason to integrate philosophy and psychology in inquiry, as Wiggins and

to long-term psychological well-being, which is the goal of a pragmatist philosophy.

Empirical studies on contemplative practices, such as meditation and mindfulness – practices often associated with withdrawal or quietism – illustrate the tension between detachment and engagement. These practices, especially those rooted in traditions like yoga or Buddhism, emphasize detachment from desire and the cultivation of stillness, echoing Schopenhauer's ideal of the will-less state. In particular, research on mindfulness-based stress reduction programmes shows that individuals who practice detachment through mindfulness report reductions in stress and improved emotional regulation (Kabat-Zinn 1990). These findings support Schopenhauer's assertion that stillness and withdrawal from striving can alleviate suffering. However, these tested practices do not advocate for a complete withdrawal from life but focus on cultivating awareness and acceptance while remaining engaged with the world. This difference in Schopenhauer's and mainstream psychology's approach suggests that while periods of detachment may be healing, complete disengagement may not align with the realities of human psychological health.

Schopenhauer's implication that shying away is a universal coping strategy is additionally complicated by studies on trauma. Research on post-traumatic stress disorder has shown that avoidance practices, which are analogous to Schopenhauer's quietism, can frequently increase mental illness symptoms over time. According to Foa and Kozak (1986), avoidance keeps individuals from processing their experiences of pain, which results in a cycle of anxiety initiated by unresolved trauma. Beyond this, it has been demonstrated that therapeutic treatments such as exposure therapy, which encourage progressive re-engagement with the cause of the trauma, are effective in fostering resilience and healing (Thompson et al. 2018). This data shows that while short retreat may bring respite, long-term coping typically demands some type of active involvement with the environment and the problems it presents. Short-

Christophersen (2019) suggest. A pragmatist scientific approach applies multiple disciplines in the pursuit of the solving of one problem. Other heuristics beyond science, such as contemplation or wisdom traditions, can be brought forth. Stoicism largely teaches men to negate the will-to-live. Epicurus, whose name is associated with luxury, proselytizes negating the will-to-live (Taylor 2013). Affirmative philosophies regarding the will to live may encompass Crowley and few others. It seems that psychology, as epistemologically shaky as it may be, is the 'odd man out' in declaring that a radical denial of the will to live is not optimal in dealing with the sufferings of the world.

term disengagement may provide some relief. This viewpoint is consistent with Friedrich Nietzsche's (2006) critique of Schopenhauer, which may be defined as a positive spin on Schopenhauer's ontology of suffering. Nietzsche advocates for an embrace of life and its conflicts, rather than withdrawing from the inherent pain that is a part of its existence.

It follows that, while Schopenhauer's quietism offers profound insights – though ones not unknown to a Vedic audience – into the nature of suffering and the potential for transcendence through withdrawal, empirical evidence shows that a total renunciation of the will may not always be the most effective or adaptive response to life's struggles. Instead, a nuanced approach – one that incorporates detachment as a tool rather than an end in itself – may better serve individuals seeking to navigate the trauma and suffering of existence.

Schopenhauer's admiration for Vedic philosophy, particularly the concept of Maya – the idea that the world of appearances is illusory and ultimately unreal – is relevant to the practices of many yogis and spiritual teachers who embrace this worldview. The Maya hypothesis holds that the phenomena of the world, including suffering and striving, are ephemeral and therefore deceptive: a mask of the deeper, unchanging reality of the universal self (Atman) or the ultimate principle (Brahman) (Radhakrishnan 1914). For yogis who adhere to this perspective, the goal of life becomes detachment from worldly illusions and the realization of the unity between Atman and Brahman. This philosophical framework aligns with Schopenhauer's quietism, which similarly advocates for a rejection of the will and the phenomenal world as the path to transcendence. However, the Maya hypothesis can also lead to troubling ethical behaviours, particularly in how some yogis and spiritual leaders treat their followers.

By viewing the world and its events to be an illusion, yogis may find themselves adopting a detached attitude not only toward their own suffering but also toward the suffering of others. This detachment, while philosophically consistent with the Maya hypothesis, can manifest in a lack of empathy or ethical accountability. In extreme cases, some spiritual leaders have used the Mayanic worldview to justify abusive behaviour toward their followers, with the implication being that the harm they inflict is inconsequential within the grand illusion of existence. For example, followers of a Mayanic yogi may be subjected to exploitation or mistreatment under the guise of 'spiritual discipline,' with the pain they are being inflicted with reframed as a necessary step toward breaking free

from the Mayanic illusion. Critics of yogis who abuse their followers argue that this misapplication of Vedic principles represents a distortion of their intended purpose, which is to foster liberation and compassion, not to excuse harm (McCartney 2022). However, while Schopenhauer's reflections on Maya emphasize withdrawal and renunciation as a personal ethical imperative, the potential for such ideas to be misused in hierarchical or authoritarian settings is great. As pragmatists, such abuse ought to make us think about the consequences of radical detachment when applied to interpersonal relationships, such as in intentional communities, Ashrams, and other intersubjectively-intense spaces.

Nietzsche's (2006) concept of the will to power is a dynamic and life-affirming alternative to Schopenhauer's vision of bondage to the will and the resignation he prescribes as its solution. For Schopenhauer (1969), the will is a blind and insatiable force that perpetually drives existence, trapping individuals in an endless cycle of striving and suffering. Schopenhauer's quietism offers some escape through the negation of the will, but this approach denies the possibility of finding meaning or fulfilment within life itself. In fact, Schopenhauer's followers, among them Otto Weininger and Philipp Mainländer, elaborate on the worthlessness of life in their own ways, taking Schopenhauer to his logical conclusion of the complete negation of the will to live by taking their own lives (despite the fact that Schopenhauer rejected suicide). Nietzsche, by contrast, reconceives the will not as a source of bondage but as a source of strength, creativity, and growth – as strained and 'pathetic' as this view is coming from the sour and misanthropic Nietzsche. The will to power, as Nietzsche (2006) describes it, is not a compulsion to strive toward some external goal but a fundamental drive to assert, expand, and overcome – ultimately to affirm life in all its struggles and complexities. Unlike Schopenhauer's rejection of the will, Nietzsche's philosophy suggests that the extension and mastery of the will lead not to suffering but to an exhilarating sense of vitality and empowerment.

Phenomenologically speaking, the will to power 'feels good' precisely because it embodies the creative force of life itself. Where Schopenhauer (1969) sees suffering as an inescapable consequence of desiring and striving, Nietzsche (2006) sees joy in the act of overcoming – of transforming obstacles into opportunities for growth. Power, in Nietzsche's ontology, is not (only or solely) domination over others but the capacity to shape one's reality through an extension of will – to affirm one's existence and to transcend limitations (though, in many instances, this does involve

power⁶ over others). This process of self-overcoming, of taking the raw material of life – including its suffering – and forging it into something meaningful, allows individuals to rise above the passive resignation of Schopenhauer's quietism. In this sense, the extension of the will is simultaneously the overcoming of the will: *the will ceases to be a burden when it is directed toward creation and growth rather than toward futile desires or static renunciation*. Nietzsche's affirmation of life, with all its struggles and imperfections, offers a path to liberation that embraces the will rather than negates it.

Thus, Nietzsche's will to power provides an empowering and holistic response to the suffering of existence than Schopenhauer's quietism. While Schopenhauer calls for withdrawal and detachment, Nietzsche urges engagement and transformation, finding strength and joy in the very act of willing. Nietzsche's life-affirming perspective not only rejects the idea that life is inherently burdensome but also celebrates the creative potential of individuals to shape their own destinies. By embracing the will to power, one does not flee from life's challenges but confronts them head-on, finding meaning and vitality in the process of overcoming. Nietzsche's philosophy turns Schopenhauer's vision on its head: where Schopenhauer sees bondage, Nietzsche sees freedom; where Schopenhauer sees suffering, Nietzsche sees the exhilaration of becoming.

Conclusion

Schopenhauer's quietism, rooted in his metaphysical understanding of the will and influenced by Vedic philosophy, offers a profound critique of the inherent suffering of existence and a radical solution: *the complete negation of the will-to-live*. His philosophy provides a framework for understanding trauma and suffering as not merely circumstantial but as fundamental to life itself, urging withdrawal and detachment as a means to transcend the ceaseless turmoil of the will. While this perspective resonates with contemplative traditions and practices that emphasize detachment and stillness, it also faces significant challenges when confronted with empirical evidence and ethical considerations. Psycholog-

⁶ Power over others includes the power of suggestion, such as through music. There is a reason that Nietzsche (2006) extols music; because it is a convincing medium of propaganda (consider his affinity for and then rejection of Wagner), to say nothing of its role in Schopenhauer's ontology, wherein it is an aesthetical negation of the will to live by proxy.

ical studies suggest that while temporary withdrawal can provide relief, long-term coping often requires re-engagement with the world, a point echoed by Nietzsche's critique of Schopenhauer's retreat from life's struggles.

Furthermore, the influence of Schopenhauer's quietism and its parallels to the Maya hypothesis in Vedic thought raises important ethical concerns related to solipsism.⁷ Detachment, when misapplied, can lead to a lack of empathy or accountability, particularly in contexts where hierarchical spiritual relationships enable abuse. This shows the limitations of radical quietism as a universal response to suffering. While Schopenhauer's insights remain invaluable for understanding the human condition, they must be balanced with a pragmatic recognition of the need for engagement among us, and the ethical responsibility that follows, in navigating the challenges of life. Ultimately, Schopenhauer's quietism offers a powerful but incomplete vision of how to confront suffering – one that must be tempered by an active (Nietzschean) affirmation of life and a commitment to addressing the sufferings of human existence head on.

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⁷ Richard Watson (1994), in his *Solipsism: The Ultimate Empirical Theory of Human Existence*, argues that solipsism is the underrated and unaddressed fundamental problem of philosophy, stating (from the book jacket), "The specter haunting modern philosophy is not the ghost in the machine: it is solipsism." He claims, rightly, in this author's view, as Immanuel Kant also recognizes, that no thinker has proven the existence of the external world. That there is a Maya hypothesis (and a related simulation hypothesis) is a testament to the enduring problem of solipsism: the ultimate empirical theory of human existence and the ultimate epistemological problem for professional philosophers. Philosophical systems, from Plato's to Peirce's, are a sidestepping of solipsism, which manifests, as Watson notes, as 'solipsism-of-the-present moment,' wherein no past or future are conceptualizable and/or sources of *epistémé*.

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