

Embracing Suffering: Unraveling 19th-Century Philosophical Perspectives Amidst Historical and Cultural Changes

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Abstract: This article explores the intersection of 19th-century philosophy with historical events, spotlighting Nietzsche, Bentham, Kierkegaard, and Schopenhauer and their distinct perspectives on suffering as a positive element, reflective of the era's cultural and historical nuances. The first part of the paper is a summary of the 19th century and its noteworthy events. The second part argues that suffering is a constant element of human existence by highlighting conceptual similarities between all four philosophers when they describe the challenges that humans must face. The third part of the paper analyzes the relationship between suffering and self-knowledge. The fourth and last part of the paper explores the mechanism of suffering as an epiphenomenon.

Keywords: suffering; history; anxiety; epiphenomenon; religion; will.

Titlu: "Îmbrățișând suferința: deslușind perspectivele filosofice din secolul al XIX-lea în pragul marilor schimbărilor istorice și culturale"

Abstract: Acest articol explorează intersecția filosofiei secolului al XIX-lea cu evenimentele istorice ale vremii, punând în evidență perspectivele lui Nietzsche, Bentham, Kierkegaard și Schopenhauer asupra suferinței ca un element pozitiv, reflectând nuanțele culturale și istorice ale epocii. Prima parte a lucrării reprezintă un rezumat al secolului al XIX-lea și al evenimentelor semnificative. A doua parte argumentează că suferința este un element constant al existenței umane, evidențiind similitățile conceptuale între cei patru filosofi. A treia parte a lucrării analizează relația dintre suferință și autocunoaștere. A patra și ultima parte a lucrării explorează mecanismul suferinței ca un epifenomen.

Cuvinte-cheie: suferință; istorie; epifenomen; anxietate; religie; voință.

Introduction

The 19th century was a transformative era marked by a complex interplay of historical events that reshaped society, philosophy, and human thought. As the century unfolded, the world experienced the impact of the Industrial Revolution, a tidal wave of technological advancements that ushered in an era of unprecedented change in manufacturing, commerce, and daily life. Concurrently, scientific advancements and revolutions echoed calls for political and social restructuring, challenging established

norms and igniting a fervor for change. Furthermore, the century saw the rise of Romanticism, a cultural movement celebrating individualism and emotion.

These dynamic shifts in science, culture, industry, and society set the stage for philosophical inquiries by thinkers of the 19th century. Specifically, the realities of the period inspired a specific view of suffering as a positive and necessary participation in everyday life. This view, and its variations, is a common occurrence for several philosophers. Hence, for Jeremy Bentham, suffering must be avoided in favor of pleasure, while for Søren Kierkegaard, it plays a key role in faith. Arthur Schopenhauer links suffering to the will to live, and Friedrich Nietzsche sees suffering as a path toward overcoming weakness.

Overall, This paper aims to explore how the historical context of the 19th century influenced the philosophical perspectives on suffering that occurred during that period. It is a qualitative analysis based on collecting, analyzing, and interpreting first and secondary sources to explore themes and patterns to answer its research question: how did the historical events of the 19th century shape and influence the philosophical perspectives on suffering? Compared to previous research focused only on the philosophical aspect (Sullivan 1996, Zalec 2020), this paper aims to offer a nuanced perspective by connecting shared views among significantly different philosophical thinkers to the historical context of the 19th century. Its relevancy lies in the interdisciplinary bridging of philosophy and history, in its focus on the dynamic interplay between broader cultural transformations and individual philosophical responses, and in contextualizing philosophical perspectives within the broader historical landscape, enhancing their comprehension.

Historical context

The XIX century was a period of significant shifts and developments that influenced all aspects of Western civilization. This century witnessed the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, kickstarting an era of rapid technological advancements, urbanization, and economic shifts. Alternatively, it was an age of political and cultural revolutions, radical restructuring of societal norms, and the spread of nationalist movements across Europe. Scientific discoveries, such as those in biology and physics, reshaped humanity's understanding of the natural world. Additionally, the rise of Romanticism brought a renewed focus on individual expression and emotion, contrasting with the Enlightenment's rationalism. All these dynamic elements, combined with social, political, and cultural revolutions, created a century of unique change, paving the way for the modern world as we know it.¹

Scientifically, it was a century ripe with advancements that revolutionized humanity's understanding of the natural world. Notably, Charles Darwin's groundbreaking theory of evolution, presented in *On the Origin of Species* (1859), reshaped biological thought, challenging old religious beliefs and initiated debates on the origins of life.² Concurrently, advancements in physics, as exemplified by James Clerk Maxwell's work, laid the foundation for modern electromagnetic theory.³ Furthermore, the century also saw significant medical strides, with breakthroughs such as anesthesia and germ theory

¹ Alex Wolf, *A Short History of the World* (London: Arcturus, 2012), 581-582.

² Matthew Jefferies, "Age of Historism," ed. Stefan Berger, *Companion to Nineteenth Century Europe - 1789-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 316.

³ Kathryn M. Olesko, "The Age of Science," ed. Stefan Berger, *Companion to Nineteenth Century Europe - 1789-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 342-343.

transforming healthcare practices. Scientific progress not only expanded the frontiers of knowledge but also influenced cultural, philosophical, and ethical debates.

The Industrial Revolution, spanning from the late 18th to the mid-19th century, marked an unprecedented shift in human history. It began in Britain and unfolded as a series of technological innovations that revolutionized manufacturing and transportation. For instance, steam engines powered by coal became the driving force behind mechanized production, rendering traditional handcraftsmanship obsolete. Additionally, factories, through new technological developments, replaced cottage industries, increasing production efficiency. This shift not only transformed the economic landscape but also reshaped societal structures as rural populations flocked to industrial centers seeking employment.¹

The impact of the Industrial Revolution extended far beyond factories and steam engines. Innovations in transportation, such as the steam locomotive and later the steamship, facilitated the rapid movement of goods and people. Railways linked nations, connecting previously isolated regions, and accelerating economic interdependence.² The rise of a market-oriented economy, coupled with technological advancements, spurred urbanization on an unprecedented scale. The growth of industrial cities brought with it both opportunities and challenges, as populations surged, living conditions deteriorated, and social inequalities intensified.³ In essence, the Industrial Revolution set in motion a series of changes that not only propelled societies into the modern era but also posed profound questions about the nature of work, progress, and the human experience.

Regarding culture, Romanticism is a cultural and artistic movement that formed in the late 18th century and flourished throughout the 19th century. It represented a powerful reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment by rejecting the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and scientific thought. In other words, Romanticism focused on the subjective experience, emotion, and the power of nature.⁴ For example, Romantic literature explored themes of individualism, intuition, and the sublime, often reflecting a deep connection with the natural world.

Furthermore, in the realm of visual arts, Romantic painters such as Theodore Rosseau and Thomas Couture sought to evoke emotional responses through their depictions of dramatic landscapes⁵ and portraits.⁶ Music also underwent a Romantic transformation, with composers like Ludwig van Beethoven and Richard Wagner infusing their works with intense emotion and expressing individualistic sentiments.⁷ The Romantic movement peaked during the mid-19th century, influencing not only the arts but also politics and philosophy. The emphasis on the individual's experience, the

¹ Robert Lee, "Industrial Revolution, Commerce, and Trade," ed. Stefan Berger, *Companion to Nineteenth Century Europe - 1789-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 52-53.

² Pamela Pilbeam, "Bourgeois Society," ed. Stefan Berger, *Companion to Nineteenth Century Europe - 1789-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 93-94.

³ Robert Lee, 51.

⁴ "An Introduction to Romanticism," Artsper, Accessed January 27, 2024, <https://blog.artsper.com/en/a-closer-look/an-introduction-to-romanticism/>.

⁵ Colta Ives and Elizabeth E. Barker, *Romanticism, and the school of nature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 134.

⁶ *Ibidem*, 154

⁷ "Romantic music," Classic FM, Accessed January 27, 2024, <https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/periods-genres/romantic/>.

celebration of intuition over reason, and a fascination with the mysterious and exotic defined Romanticism as a multifaceted and transformative cultural phenomenon.

Politically, the 19th century was a period of revolutions and nationalism which altered the geopolitical landscape and reshaped the concept of statehood. The ripples of the French Revolution traveled across Europe, inspiring movements for liberty, equality, and national sovereignty. Notably, the unification of Italy and Germany during this period exemplified the desire for national autonomy, with leaders like Giuseppe Garibaldi and Otto von Bismarck playing pivotal roles.¹ Simultaneously, nationalists struggled for independence in various regions, from Greece to Latin America, challenging colonial powers. These movements not only transformed the political map but also underscored the emergence of new ideologies that emphasized the importance of cultural identity, language, and shared history in the formation of modern nation-states. The intersection of political revolutions and nationalism in the 19th century laid the groundwork for the complex geopolitical landscape in the following decades.

Turning to religion, during the 19th century, profound religious and cultural shifts challenged traditional beliefs and reshaped societal norms. Notably, the growth of secularism led to a decline in the influence of organized religion, particularly in Western societies², and the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and scientific inquiry contributed to skepticism toward religious dogma.³ Additionally, new religious movements and philosophical ideologies appeared, because of the cultural changes. Spiritualism, transcendentalism, and various forms of mysticism gained popularity, reflecting a quest for alternative sources of meaning and purpose.⁴ These cultural shifts led to the creation of a belief system and to new philosophical perspectives, fostering an environment of exploration and experimentation in matters of faith and spirituality.

In conclusion, the confluence of these historical events, coupled with religious and cultural shifts, led to profound transformations in societal structures, values, and ideologies. As industrialization and capitalism took hold, social and economic changes generated both prosperity and challenges, giving rise to labor movements and debates on inequality. The century witnessed the emergence of nation-states, the spread of secularism, and the interconnectedness of a globalized world. These diverse shifts were reflected in the philosophy of the period. The ideas of Bentham, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche reflect the period's tendency towards overcoming challenges, questioning traditions, and applying a methodical or scientific mindset to philosophical matters. Overall, it was a complex interplay between progress and challenges, tradition and innovation, and individual aspirations and collective endeavors.

¹ Stefan Berger, "National Movements," ed. Stefan Berger, *Companion to Nineteenth Century Europe - 1789-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 183.

² Wolfram Kaiser, "Clericalism – that is our enemy," eds. Christopher Klark, Wolfram Kaiser, *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 48-49.

³ Christopher Clark, "The New Catholicism and the European culture wars," eds. Christopher Klark, Wolfram Kaiser, *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 13-14.

⁴ Leigh Wilson, "The Cross-correspondences, the Nature of Evidence and the Matter of Writing," eds. Tatiana Kontou, Sarah Willburn, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and the Occult* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 101.

The omnipresence of suffering

The first common element to all philosophers present in this paper is the everlasting presence of suffering in everyday life. Each engaged with the human condition through their observations of society, culture, and individual behavior. Whether critiquing utilitarian ethics (Bentham), exploring existential angst (Kierkegaard), challenging moral conventions (Nietzsche), or delving into the metaphysics of suffering (Schopenhauer), their analyses reflected a response to the complexities of human existence. Hence, suffering can arise from either real or abstract sources, be internal or external, and originate in human existence. In other words, suffering is constant because its causes are constant.

Historically, their views can be traced to a combination of several factors that characterized the 19th century. First, the gap between Enlightenment ideals and the 19th century, marked by industrialization, social inequality, and political upheavals, may have contributed to a critical reevaluation of optimistic views about human well-being. Second, observing the consequences of industrialization could have influenced these philosophers to consider the darker aspects of progress, such as increased suffering among the working class. Third, the challenges to traditional religious beliefs and values, as secularism and skepticism became more prevalent may have prompted them to confront existential questions about the nature of suffering in the absence of religious certainties. Overall, the historical context of the 19th century is strongly reflected in their diverse perspectives on the human condition, ethics, and the pervasive presence of suffering in the intricate mechanism of existence.

In Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian view, pain, together with pleasure are described as two primary goals for every action. As a dichotomy, every action should avoid suffering and aim for pleasure. Accordingly, for Bentham, pain and pleasure define the standard for good or wrong in every thought and action.¹ Suffering, therefore, is always present because, in his perspective, all human action ends in either pleasure or pain.

For Arthur Schopenhauer, what gives suffering its consistency is the will to live. Specifically, it is the blind and unconscious force that propels individuals and all living things to pursue their needs and desires. Thus, as Schopenhauer describes it, the main goal of will is to satisfy the inseparable needs of the human body, such as maintenance and reproduction.² However, due to its never-ending nature, when one need is satisfied, another immediately takes its place in an endless cycle.³ Hence, as Christopher Janaway summarizes, any craving may come to an end, but not the will itself.⁴ As a result of this mechanism, the dominance of the will makes happiness and peace unobtainable.

In the case of Søren Kierkegaard, suffering is an inevitable part of the journey of a true Christian. In his view, the world full of sin and as a result, Christianity becomes an offense which leads to a collision between the faithful and sinners. Hence, as Kierkegaard points out, the resulting opposition necessarily leads to the suffering of the Christian.⁵ Furthermore, he argues that one cannot love God without this conflict. Accordingly, as

¹ Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Ontario: Batoche Books, 2000), 14

² Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 150.

³ *Ibidem*, 573.

⁴ Christopher Janaway, *Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 325.

⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 251.

Bojan Zalec points out, life without suffering is at best just a possibility, but it is actually impossible.¹ Therefore, as long as the friction between Christianity and sinners exists, suffering follows close behind.

In comparison, for Friedrich Nietzsche, the consistency of suffering in the world results on a smaller scale and is part of his theory of the relationship between pain and pleasure as epiphenomena (secondary effects). In his view, pain, and pleasure do not stand in contradiction to one another and their relationship should not be considered a dichotomy because they are both by-products of events and actions, not causes. Furthermore, in his view, pleasure is a form of pain because it is structured as a rhythm of little unpleasant stimuli.² Accordingly, as Liam O'Sullivan points out, due to their nature as correlates, pleasure and pain are strongly interconnected.³ Thus, suffering is constant because all pleasure contains a measure of pain.

Overall, for all of the above-mentioned philosophers suffering is unescapeable because it's linked through necessity with the human experience. Human actions, thoughts, acts, and choices start or lead to a perceived form of either pleasure or pain.

Suffering and knowledge of the self

Another common element in 19th-century philosophy is the relationship between suffering and knowledge. For Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, by embracing the experience of suffering, an individual gains a profound understanding and knowledge of the self. In other words, the knowledge gained is more accurate through the occurrence of suffering rather than by its absence. Alternatively, for Schopenhauer, intelligence deepens suffering because it enhances the capacity for more suffering.

For Kierkegaard, understanding suffering leads to a deeper understanding of it as a way of overcoming it. Throughout his life, he experienced several moments of suffering. However, instead of avoiding or denying suffering, Kierkegaard chose to embrace and examine it. His approach to suffering extended to others as well. Specifically, he would care for his friends not by suppressing suffering, but by making them understand it better.⁴ Kierkegaard describes the reason why it was a necessary solution in *The Concept of Anxiety*. When discussing anxiety, he argues that it is imperative to learn what anxiety is to avoid unnecessary suffering.⁵ In other words, anxiety becomes overwhelming when it is ignored. Hence, in addition to self-knowledge, embracing suffering also has a strengthening effect, allowing the individual to progress through life without unnecessary pain.

Historically, the rise of secularism and the challenges posed to traditional religious beliefs may have contributed to Kierkegaard's exploration of individual faith, subjectivity, and the existential challenges of existence. For example, Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety (or dread) reflects the challenge of existential angst. The fear of the unknown, the absence of absolute certainties, and the individual's responsibility in shaping their own existence became prominent themes in his works. Kierkegaard sought to address the existential aspects of human experience, which included grappling with the potential for suffering and anxiety in the face of a changing world.

¹ Bojan Zalec, "Kierkegaard on the beneficial yoke of suffering," *XLinguae* 13, no. 3 (June 2020): 5, doi: 10.18355/XL.2020.13.03.01.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (Random House Inc., New York, 1967), 697.

³ Liam O'Sullivan, "Nietzsche and Pain," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 11 (Spring 1994): 14.

⁴ Clare Carlisle, *Kierkegaard: a guide for the perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 20.

⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Conceptul de Anxietate* (Timișoara: Amarcord, 1998), 203.

For Nietzsche, as Liam O'Sullivan points out, suffering is a form of intelligence. It doesn't function as a stimulus, nor does it induce reactions to avoid suffering. Instead, it has an evaluative function, through which it delineates states and conditions that have the potential to be undesirable.¹ Thus, suffering provides content for personal analytical acuity and functions as a tool for avoiding undesirable situations. Alternatively, the absence of suffering leads to a weakening of intelligence. As Nietzsche points out, through the contribution of suffering, any concept is understood completely and objectively, but without it or any other conscious state, intelligence is utterly impaired.²

Nietzsche was strongly influenced by the Industrial Revolution as he observed the consequences of industrialization, including the rise of urban poverty, harsh working conditions, and a sense of alienation among individuals as traditional ways of life were disrupted. These changes could have influenced his view of suffering as an evaluative function. In a society undergoing rapid transformation, where individuals experienced new forms of hardship and disorientation, Nietzsche may have seen suffering as a tool through which individuals evaluated their states and conditions.

Schopenhauer provides an alternative view of the relationship between suffering and self-knowledge. In his view, intelligence and the clarity that comes with brings more suffering or awareness of it. Specifically, intelligence enhances an individual's capacity to suffer.³ He goes so far as to say that genius, presumed to have the highest measure of intelligence, is the one that suffers the most.⁴

Both Romanticism and Schopenhauer's philosophy acknowledged the darker, tragic aspects of human existence. While Romanticism often celebrated the sublime, it also grappled with the darker side of emotions and the complexities of human experience. Schopenhauer's focus on the omnipresence of suffering and the ceaseless striving of the will reflects a similar acknowledgment of the challenges inherent in life.

Overall, the philosophical perspectives of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Schopenhauer converge on the view of suffering as a transformative tool for self-knowledge as a reflection of societal upheaval, industrialization, and cultural shifts in the historical context. In their view, the knowledge of suffering offers a new dimension of understanding that can either improve an individual's life or worsen it.

Suffering as an epiphenomenon

The concept of suffering as an epiphenomenon can be approached from different philosophical perspectives, although it is not universally accepted. In general terms, it refers to suffering, along with pleasure, as an incidental outcome, byproduct, or secondary effect of another, primary phenomenon. In other words, they are not goals in themselves but rather indicators that accompany each action. In the case of 19th-century philosophy, suffering is seen as a strong influence on the action which causes it. Hence, it can be seen as a means of judging actions based on their outcomes.

Jeremy Bentham developed his hedonistic calculus, also known as *felicific calculus*, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The concept was introduced in Bentham's major work, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, published in 1789. The hedonistic calculus is a quantitative method proposed by Bentham for

¹ O'Sullivan, "Nietzsche," 16.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 87.

³ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Wisdom of the World* (Pennsylvania: Pen State University Press, 2005), 32.

⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea* (London: Ballantyne Press, 1976), 400.

determining the moral worth of an action by calculating the overall pleasure or pain it produces.

Within calculus, pleasure, and pain function as goals and foundations for any human activity. Every chain of actions originates in this dichotomy and even motivation is a causal sequence that is reduceable to pleasure and pain. Based on this principle, every action is judged as being good if it produces pleasure and alleviates pain or bad if it causes pain and nullifies happiness.¹ It's a monochromatic perspective where, automatically, an action is labeled as good or bad depending on the state of affairs it brings in the end. Its origin lies in the scientific revolution of the 19th century and the Industrial Revolution which had a profound impact on the way people approached knowledge and understanding. Bentham, influenced by the scientific methods of observation and measurement, sought to apply similar principles to ethics.

This simplistic view of the relationship between suffering and pleasure undermines the complexity found. Any human sentiment or relationship cannot be reduced simplistically to a calculus. As Jonny Anomaly points out, Bentham's hedonistic theory was criticized by the thinkers who followed him. For instance, John Stuart Mill emphasizes the importance of quality and intellectual efforts in terms of utility, as opposed to simple hedonistic calculation. This transition occurred after utilitarians observed situations where the efforts of a community to minimize suffering did not lead to a maximization of utility.²

Alternatively, in Kierkegaard's view, suffering, as an epiphenomenon, functions as a compass and a reminder of faith. He describes the first function in *The Sickness unto Death* when discussing the cases of individuals failing to attain their goals. In this context, suffering takes the shape of despair, and it manifests itself as an imbalance between the body and soul or an act of rebellion against the current situation.³ Hence, it indicates a lack that the individual must remedy.

On the other hand, in a religious context, Kierkegaard links the second function with an individual relationship with God. He theorizes that even as Christian individuals live in constant suffering, due to moral decay that characterizes the world, they only suffer in human terms. Through their belief that God loves them even with their flaws, they become able to bear suffering with the realization that Christian suffering brings the greatest joy.⁴ According to Kierkegaard, this state of bliss consists of remembering suffering which was overcome with the assistance of God.⁵ Furthermore, true Christians must individually bear the weight of their suffering without letting anyone else do it, otherwise they will not be able to overcome properly and jeopardize their place in Heaven.⁶ As a result, in a religious context, suffering is a sign of being closer to God.

This view, which emphasizes the connection between an individual and God, can be seen as a result of the religious and cultural changes of the 19th century. In the context of the rise of secularism and skepticism, Kierkegaard's exploration of the relationship

¹ Bentham, *An Introduction*, 83-84.

² Johnny Anomaly, "Nietzsche's Critique of Utilitarianism," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 25 (spring 2005): 4, doi: 10.1353/nie.2005.0002.

³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding discourses in various spirits* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 44.

⁴ Zalec, "Kierkegaard," 6.

⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Christian Discourses and The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 104-105.

⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding discourses in various spirits*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 227-228.

between faith and individual existence led him to emphasize the importance of personal experience and engagement with religious truths. Hence, suffering, in his view, could serve as a means of deepening one's relationship with God and understanding the nature of faith.

As pointed out in the second chapter, for Nietzsche, pain and pleasure are both sides of the same coin, and one cannot exist without the other. Compared to utilitarianism, as Liam O'Sullivan points out, any sort of pleasure-pain calculus is irrelevant in planning any actions.¹ Accepting them as epiphenomena is, in Nietzsche's perspective, a symbol of a strong and courageous individual.² Consequently, in this context, suffering functions as an obstacle that inspires an individual to overcome his shortcomings. Alternatively, Daniel I. Harris compares Nietzsche's self-transcendence to the Greek agon. Specifically, just as Greek competitors had to conform to certain standards to overcome them, the individual must overcome his suffering and weakness, asserting himself as both a subject of suffering and its victor.³ Thus, for Nietzsche, suffering as a byproduct is meant to push the individual to overcome his failures.

Historically, Nietzsche's view was influenced by the significant cultural and social changes of his period. The intellectual climate of the time, marked by scientific advancements, shifts in cultural values, and questioning of traditional beliefs, influenced Nietzsche's critique of established norms and his proposal for a reevaluation of values.

To conclude, suffering as an epiphenomenon encompasses diverse perspectives that emphasize a common view in which suffering, as a consequence that must be overcome or avoided, is a threshold to be crossed for the fulfillment of an individual's goals. Jeremy Bentham's hedonistic calculus, a product of the scientific and industrial revolutions, quantifies morality within an action. Søren Kierkegaard introduces nuance, portraying suffering as a compass and a religious reminder of God for a Christian traveling through a world of sin. Friedrich Nietzsche rejects utilitarianism, seeing suffering as integral to human strength. All of them reflect historically the drive of the 19th century towards transforming shortcomings into strengths.

Conclusion

The 19th century was undoubtedly a century of change in all aspects of human existence, from technological and scientific advancements to political and cultural shifts. The inherent drive for progress, overcoming obstacles, rational inquiry, and challenging tradition was strongly reflected in the philosophy of the period. Many philosophers incorporated unique elements into their theories and shared certain points of view, despite their different philosophical views. Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian views were strongly influenced by the scientific revolution, while Schopenhauer incorporated elements of Romanticism in his theory of the will to live. Kierkegaard focused on the relationship between personal experience and faith and Nietzsche's ideas illustrate the drive towards improvement inspired in part by the Industrial Revolution. Despite their differences, they all saw suffering as a constant element and an epiphenomenon with a crucial role in self-knowledge and overcoming weaknesses. All in all, their views represent unique threads in the tapestry of shifts and changes that define the 19th century.

¹ O'Sullivan, "Nietzsche," 14-15.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (Random House Inc., New York, 1967), 311.

³ Daniel I. Harris, "Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 22, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5325/jnietstud.48.1.0017>

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BIONOTE:

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