

Schopenhauer

Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, Aesthetics & Advice

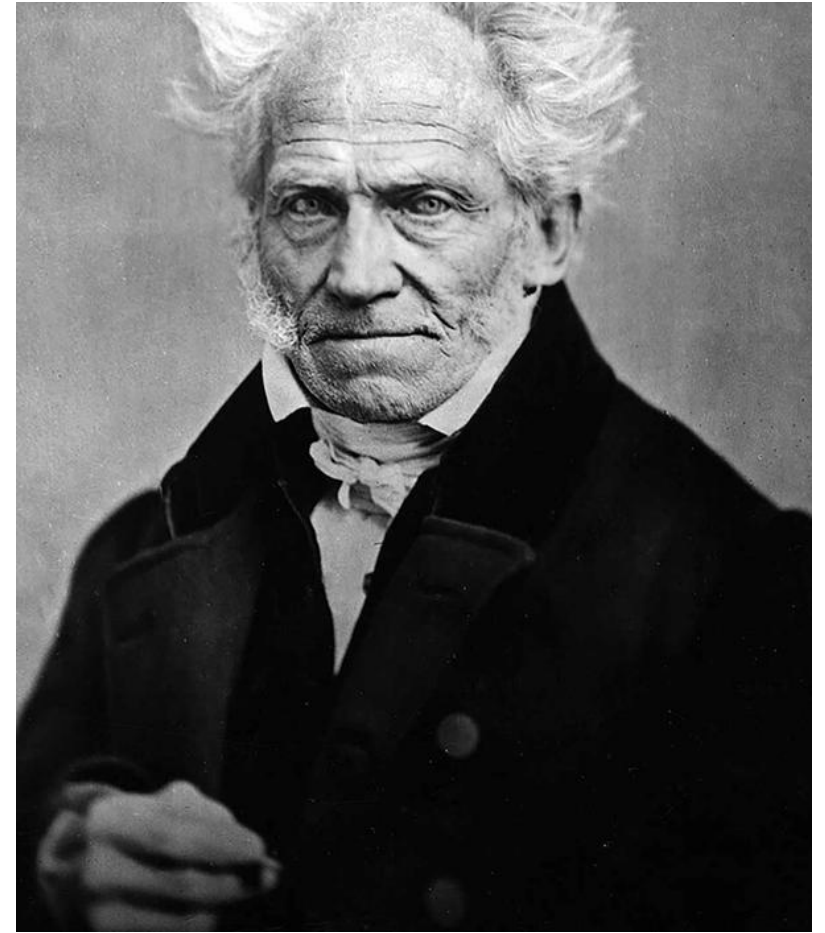
Some ideas about the Self

- Self-actualising and unconscious urges – Jung
- Personhood: having rights and moral responsibility
- A façade for a nothingness, a non-self – Buddhism, Hume
- Fallen & sinful and in need of redemption – Catholic
- A spark of separate self-awareness
- A curse to be ameliorated - Schopenhauer

Outline

- Brief Biography
- Epistemology – explanation by means of sufficient reason
- Metaphysical Background
 - Kant
 - Schopenhauer's amendments
 - The Will
- Morality
- Aesthetics
- How to Live
- Influences: The Darkling Thrush

Schopenhauer



Schopenhauer: Introduction: Brief Biography

- 1788 – 1860
- Father's suicide
- financial independence: held out for 100% bankruptcy repayment
- Feud with Hegel and academia
- break with mother
- Misogyny
- Seamstress pushed down stairs (29 years of recompense)
- Some fame in later life

The World as Will and Representation

Two Essays on Morality

Essays and Aphorisms

Counsels and Maxims (available on Youtube)

The Art of Being Right: 38 ways to win an argument

Epistemology

- Principle of Sufficient Reason: needed to understand causality, knowledge and existence
- There is a reason for everything: Leibniz
- (Accountancy analogy)
- Schopenhauer's expansion
 - Physical causal chains
 - Time and space: arithmetic and geometry
 - Logic ($A > B > C \implies A > C$)
 - Human Motivation: why people act as they do

Discussion

- Does the Principle of Sufficient Reason seem reasonable? Is there a reason for everything?

Metaphysics

- Kant:
- Phenomenal world (sufficient reason).
- How explain that though can't see causation (Hume) we know every event must have a cause. Why?
- Noumenal world (unitary & unknowable) – onto which we project time, space and causation to make sense of it.
- Schopenhauer's adjustment
 - We are both objects and subjects
 - Introspection shows us the noumenal Will

The Will and the will

- Will to live/ energy: we are but manifestation of the Will in the phenomenal world where the principle of sufficient reason applies. Competition with others.
- The body is the manifestation of the will. (“My body and my will are one.”) Teeth/stomach=manifestations of the Will’s hunger
- Unconscious striving and desires (Freud?)
- Never satisfied – one desire replaced by another
- Egoistic
- Always in pain (desires as a form of pain)
- Applies to physical world – animals, gravity and architectural columns

Sometimes it almost seems as this might be the case

- David Attenborough's bramble
- Gear Acquisition Syndrome
 - Lenses

Fuji and M42 lenses



- Happiness= temporary removal from the pain of desire (not something extra)
- Life is basically unpleasant, all we can do is ameliorate our suffering.

Discussion

- Is this an accurate or useful way to look at the world? Are we doomed to merely ameliorate a necessarily unpleasant existence?

Ethics

- Determinism (not fatalism) in the phenomenological world of causation and the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Why do we feel responsible for our actions?
- Empirical Character v Intelligible Character
 - Intelligible character created by the Will, unchanging, to be discovered. Feeling of responsibility: Mutually reinforcing. Don't cheat others of their money
- “Man can do as he wills but he cannot will what he wills”
- Attack on Kant's Categorical Imperative
 - do unto others; ends in themselves; universalizable maxim
- Rational and smuggled theology, not selfless
- Moral behaviour comes from **instinctive compassion** (We recognise the Will in them – Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita)
- Examples of people about to die doing something to save others – selfless (dog) – cake!
- “**Harm no one; rather, help everyone to the extent that you can**”
 - Justice and Loving Kindness

Discussion

- Do we prefer Kant or Schopenhauer's account of ethics? Rationality or Feeling

Aesthetics: Jacob van Oost - The Calling of St Matthew 1648



Discussion: What makes a great work of art?

Schopenhauer on Aesthetics

- We're taken beyond the individual & particular to contemplating the not-quite-noumenal Form
- We are taken out of ourselves and become will-less
- Heidegger: *ready to hand* v *present at hand*
- Sublime – where there's an element of danger (vs Dutch domestic scenes)
- Hierarchy of Arts – music at apex - direct copy of the Will
- Recent research – physiological benefits of being in presence of original great art.

Discussion:

Are there better accounts of the nature and effects of great art as being taken out of ourselves?

How to Live: Amelioration of the misery of the Will

- Acting morally and creating and contemplating art help remove you from the baleful influence of the Will – temporarily
- **Asceticism** (and stoicism): Restrict our desires.
- Having fewer essentials makes us less vulnerable
- What happens to us: metempsychosis v palingenesis
- **“Don’t regard your days as a large pile, a few of which may be wasted but each as a life in itself.” (cf Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence)**
- Appalled by slavery and cruelty to animals
- Insurance
- Politically conservative – Hobbesian sovereign
- Misogynistic
- Long walks and flute practice.

Discussion: Is asceticism a useful strategy and how far should we take it?

Influences

By:

Kant

Ancient Hindu writing: Upanishads

Buddhism (perhaps)

To

Nietzsche: naturalistic ethics

Freud (perhaps)

More generally – **Logical Positivism** and the Verification principle

Forget his metaphysics – look at his Ethics

Thomas Hardy

The Darkling Thrush Thomas Hardy

I leant upon a coppice gate
 When Frost was spectre-grey,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
 The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
 Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
 Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
 The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
 The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
 Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
 Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
 The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
 Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
 In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
 Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
 Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
 Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
 His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
 And I was unaware.