[*The first October 2021 draft for the* Spinoza Cambridge Lexicon.
Please do not quote, but comments are welcome. Word limit: 500.]

Valtteri Viljanen

SCHOPENHAUER

There are two major aspects in Arthur Schopenhauer's (1788–1860) relationship to Spinoza. First, by the nineteenth century the fortunes of Spinoza—whom Schopenhauer admired as a person—had been effectually reversed; accordingly, Schopenhauer discusses his ideas relatively neutrally, as part of the tradition. Second, despite being the self-proclaimed primary torchbearer of the Kantian legacy, Schopenhauer develops a metaphysics of the thing in itself in some notable ways not unlike that of Spinoza.

To begin with the latter aspect, Schopenhauer emphasizes that despite the manifold of finite things in which the will manifests itself in the phenomenal world, "it is everywhere one and the same" (W1 I.23). In the final analysis, only the *monistic will* exists, grounding everything else. This is in line with the fact that since the Pantheism Controversy, precisely Spinoza's monism was enthusiastically endorsed by numerous German thinkers. Moreover, Schopenhauer emphasizes that the nature of both the will in itself and its manifestations is endless and blind *striving*. Schopenhauer stays rather silent about these similarities, only once in his published works admitting that Spinoza understood that "the inner essence in all things is absolutely one and the same" and that "for me as for Spinoza, the world exists as a result of its own inner force and through itself" (W2 IV.50). However, Spinozistic strivers are fundamentally intelligible, while the finite manifestations of the Schopenhauerian will reflect the inscrutability of their source.

As for the former aspect, Schopenhauer presents his own, often rather critical, idiosyncratic, and sometimes downright strange, views on Spinoza's philosophy—which shows firsthand command of a wide array of Spinoza's works. We can discern four main themes. First, Schopenhauer lambasts Spinoza's methodology in ontology: he accuses Spinoza of wrongly attempting to derive things from randomly chosen and even idiosyncratic abstract concepts; this is at odds with Schopenhauer's experiential way of arriving at the insight that the inner nature of the world is to be identified with the will. Second, Schopenhauer famously comments that "Spinoza says (Ep. 62) that if a stone thrown flying through the air were conscious it would think it was flying of its own will. I only add that the stone would be right" (W1 I.24). Here the idea is that just as natural forces are determined by efficient causes, a conscious will is determined by motives; the difference between conscious and unconscious actions does not cut deep enough to make them fundamentally different. Third, Schopenhauer has a rather low opinion of Spinoza's practical philosophy: he claims that Spinoza disingenuously derives commonly accepted ethical norms from the egoistic conatus principle. He also complains that

Spinoza's form of pantheism is essentially optimism, for if everything is divine, everything is as it should be, perfect. Finally, becoming a pure and timeless subject of cognition is a major goal in Schopenhauer's ethics, and he declares: "It is also what Spinoza had in mind when he wrote: 'the mind is eternal to the extent that it conceives things under the form of eternity' (5p31s)" (W1 II.34).

Secondary literature

Berman, David. 1982. "Spinoza's Spiders, Schopenhauer's Dogs." *Philosophical Studies (Dublin)* 29: 202–9.

Brann, Henry W. 1972. "Schopenhauer and Spinoza." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 10 (2): 181–96

Segev, Mor. 2021. "Schopenhauer's Critique of Spinoza's Pantheism, Optimism, and Egoism." – *A Companion to Spinoza*, edited by Yitzhak Y. Melamed, 557–67. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Viljanen, Valtteri. 2009. "Schopenhauer's Twofold Dynamism." – *The World as Active Power*, edited by Juhani Pietarinen and Valtteri Viljanen, 305–30. Leiden: Brill.

Related entries

Desire; eternity of mind; geometrical method; Kant, Immanuel; Nietzsche, Friedrich; Pantheism Controversy; striving.