

### Schopenhauer-Rezeption in Großbritannien

It could be argued that the first truly impartial reception of Schopenhauer is to be found in Great Britain. In Germany, philosophy's professional elite were finally provoked into responding to Schopenhauer only when *Parerga and Paralipomena* gained a general and popular interest which Schopenhauer had not experienced with any of his previous publications. But the assessments by these academics did not please Schopenhauer. He judged them to be muddled and ignorant, and he even privately accused Fichte's slighted son, Immanuel Gottlieb, of spreading straightforward lies. The only German reviews of which Schopenhauer approved were penned by members of his own circle of friends and admirers: F. L. A. Dorguth, August Gabriel Kilzer, and Julius Frauenstädt (Cartwright 2010, 524-6). However, news soon came from across the English Channel of an appraisal that was (for the most part) highly favourable.

The article, 'Iconoclasm in German Philosophy', was written by John Oxenford and appeared in the *Westminster Review* in April 1853. It argued that Schopenhauer, the estranged iconoclast of German philosophy, would appeal greatly to English tastes. Weary of the complex and seemingly empty abstractions of better known German philosophers—with Hegel in mind—the 'Englishman' would find that 'Schopenhauer gives you a comprehensible system, clearly worded; and you may know, beyond the possibility of a doubt, what you are accepting and what you are rejecting' (Oxenford 1853, 393). When Schopenhauer came to read Oxenford's review, he was delighted that his prose style had been so sharply distinguished from the verbosity that he fiercely detested in his contemporaries. In fact, the fit between Schopenhauer and the British in this respect was close to inevitable. As an Anglophile in many ways, Schopenhauer's use of the German language was self-consciously modelled upon the common-sense idiom of British philosophers such as Berkeley and Hume.

Oxenford's comments were not limited to matters of style, however. He goes on to give a rough chronology of Schopenhauer's publications as well as a sympathetic outline of his thought in general. He even skilfully translates passages from Schopenhauer's work, because no other English translations were available. But in spite of his praise, Oxenford baulks at Schopenhauer's more radical conclusions,

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once again attempting to speak from the perspective of national character. For all their stylistic excesses, the tendency of Schopenhauer's contemporaries towards liberal political ideals would possess greater appeal to Victorian Britons than Schopenhauer's anti-progressive pessimism, Oxenford argues: 'Their rallying cry, however strange the language in which it may be couched, is still "progress!" and therefore they are still the pedantic sympathisers with the spirit of modern civilisation'. He therefore resists what he calls Schopenhauer's 'ultra-pessimism', stunned that the 'genial' and 'ingenious' manner of Schopenhauer's teaching could be so at odds with its 'disheartening' and even 'repulsive' final verdict (Oxenford 1853, 394). Oxenford's article ends with the hope for a new German philosopher of 'equal power, comprehensiveness, ingenuity and erudition' who would range 'on a side more in harmony with our own feelings and convictions' (Oxenford 1853, 407). It therefore ends with the implicit regret that Schopenhauer, with all his talent, was not this philosopher.

In the time between Oxenford's review and the appearance of full English translations, the only other access the British reader had to Schopenhauer's words were by means of Helen Zimmern's 1876 biography *Arthur Schopenhauer: His Life and His Philosophy*. Though, by her own admission, the biographical material of this work was harvested mostly from Wilhelm Gwinner's memoir (Zimmern 1873, vi), its lengthy translations of significant passages, as well as personal letters, would be an important resource. When full English translations were finally published, the bulk of the labour divided itself in three main ways. First came R. B. Haldane and John Kemp's 1883 translation of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, rendered *The World as Will and Idea*. By 1957, the year before the appearance of E. F. J. Payne's soon to be authoritative translation *The World as Will and Representation*, the first edition of Haldane and Kemp's version had run into its tenth impression, and so a second edition was released. Meanwhile, from 1889 onwards, a profusion of Schopenhauer's essays translated by Thomas Bailey Saunders would appear. These essays were harvested mainly from *Parerga and Paralipomena*, beginning with 'Religion: A Dialogue', and again they would not be superseded until after Payne's translation of the work in full in 1974. Finally, in the same year that Saunders would begin his campaign of translations, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* and *On the Will in Nature* were published as a single volume translated by Jessie

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Taylor, publishing under the name of her husband Karl Hillebrand. Taylor would be the first to translate Schopenhauer's '*Vorstellung*' as 'representation' (Cartwright 2010, 431), and many editions of her translation followed, until Payne's translation of *The Fourfold Root*, also published in 1974.

Haldane and Kemp's translation introduced Schopenhauer properly to one of his most notable and significant admirers in Britain: the novelist Thomas Hardy. In contrast to Oxenford, Hardy could more than stomach Schopenhauer's 'ultra-pessimism': he positively revelled in it! His notebooks from 1883-1912 demonstrate a close reading of Schopenhauer, and as a consequence some Schopenhauerian themes are identifiable in his novels. For example, in *Jude the Obscure*, the sexual appetite is represented as a malign and deceptive force: it first leads Jude away from his diligent self-imposed study and into the arms of the whorish Arabella, and upon the inevitable collapse of that relationship, the same drive is then responsible for Jude's hopeless idealisation of Sue. As Hardy records in his notebooks, '*Schopenhauer*. – No man loves the woman – only his dream' (quoted in Kelly 1988, 239). When whatever love Jude and Sue shared has gone, and both lives have run around, they curse their existence and long for death.

Schopenhauer's influence on Hardy has been widely noted (Brennecke 1924, 9; Kelly 1988; Diffey 1996; Magee 1997, 406-8; Young 2005, 236; Bishop 2012, 341-2). But it has been widely disputed too. The main objection is that, before he even could have read Schopenhauer, Hardy was evidently Schopenhauerian in spirit. The elements of 'pessimism, dislike of Christianity, interest in art, desire for stasis and peace [...] Hellenism, a sort of spiritualism, kindness to animals' (C. H. Salter quoted in Diffey 1996, 238) are all there in his pre-1883 prose and personality. Indeed, as demonstrated in his letters, Hardy and his friends were concerned to weaken the association with Schopenhauer, which was beginning to come into focus in commentary on Hardy. On 25th July 1909, Hardy responds to news from his friend Edmund Gosse that the critic F. A. Hedgcock had been promulgating just such an association. After writing of his disappointment that literary criticism had become so biographical, Hardy says, 'I may observe incidentally that I hope my philosophy—if my few thoughts deserve such a big name—is much more modern than Schopenhauer' (Hardy 1984, 37; see also Hardy 1982, 351). Gosse then takes it upon

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himself to relay Hardy's disapproval to Hedgcock, and vouches for the pre-existence of Hardy's pessimism at least since he had first met the man in 1870.

In fact, if Hardy believed that '[w]hen we have got rid of a thousand remediable ills, it will be time to determine whether the ill that is irremediable outweighs the good', as he intimated to William Archer in 1901 (quoted in Kelly 1988, 245), then at least in this respect his pessimism really does come away from Schopenhauer's. It will be remembered that for Schopenhauer, '[i]n the long run [...] it is quite superfluous to dispute whether there is more good or evil in the world; for the mere existence of evil decides the matter' (*WWR* II 576).

Schopenhauer would also exert a formative influence on D. H. Lawrence. In fact, he helped to awaken Lawrence to what would be an enduring theme—perhaps *the* theme—of Lawrence's literary output. To a young man struggling against residual Victorian stuffiness and decorum regarding sexuality, Schopenhauer, the author of *The Metaphysics of Love*, as it was then translated, was refreshingly candid and open. Schopenhauer was not afraid to place the sexual impulse at the centre of life. Nor did he shy away from the character of that impulse, which is irresistible, primal, painful, and moreover, is not to be conceived as a deviation from our true nature, but rather the principal expression of it. He also gladly pointed out the many romantic ideals, the 'immaterial soap-bubbles' (*WWR* II 535), which accompany sexual longing, as well as the amusingly covert and embarrassed way in which sexuality is spoken about: 'the public secret which must never be distinctly mentioned [...] the constant concealment of the main thing' (*WWR* II 571). And in spite of all the turmoil, Schopenhauer observed, lovers throughout time conspire to repeat the same painful story: 'we see in the midst of the tumult the glances of two lovers meet longingly: yet why so secretly, nervously, and furtively? Because these lovers are the traitors who secretly strive to perpetuate the whole trouble and toil that would otherwise rapidly come to an end' (*WWR* II 560). Though moved by this observation, Lawrence gathered—probably correctly—that Schopenhauer had never personally experienced such a compelling romance, writing in his marginal annotations, 'This charitable and righteous man never stole a secret look—he would spare the poor individual, dear soul' (quoted in Brunsdale 1978, 126).

The version of Schopenhauer received by Lawrence was even not completely free from the contemptible priggishness of which he sought to be relieved. While at

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university in 1908, Lawrence had borrowed a copy of *The Metaphysics of Love* from his first girlfriend Jessie Chambers, which he proceeded to annotate. The translator, Mrs. Rudolf Dircks, had been translating selected essays of Schopenhauer's since 1897, but this rendering contained many mistranslations which could only be intentional. To start, she inaccurately translates the original German title of the essay, 'Metaphysik der Geschlechtsliebe', by omitting the word 'sexual'. Shyness from this word and its connotations is reflected throughout the Dircks' text. For example, where Schopenhauer claims that a man's love declines, and a woman's love increases, after it has been 'satisfied [befriedigt]', Dircks prudishly translates 'returned' (Brunsdale 1978, 123). One can only wonder what Lawrence would have made of an unadulterated Schopenhauerian account of sexual love.

At around the time of Lawrence's discovery, Schopenhauer was also having an effect on the theoretical foundations of a new movement in British poetry. It is a connection to British literature which is far less reported than Schopenhauer's connection both to Hardy and to Lawrence. The poet and critic T. E. Hulme, precursor and architect to the modernist movement which came to be known as Imagism, wrote in his essay 'Bergson's Theory of Art' that 'In essence, of course, [Bergson's] theory is exactly the same as Schopenhauer's' (Hulme 1994, 194). The purpose of Hulme's essay, or at least the function that it ended up performing, was to give by means of Bergson's philosophy the theoretical account of aesthetic experience that lies at the very centre of Imagist poetics. Hulme was not exaggerating when he admitted the essential similarities to Schopenhauer's account: they are striking, perhaps even more striking than Hulme was aware. Take this passage from Hulme's essay, for example: 'From time to time in a fit of absentmindedness nature raises up minds which are more detached from life [...] which at once reveals itself by a virginal manner of seeing, hearing or thinking [...] One applies himself to form, not as it is practically useful in relation to him, but as it is in itself, as it reveals the inner life of things' (Hulme 1994, 195-6). Note that not only is the transformation of the subject uncannily reminiscent of Schopenhauer, but the corresponding transformation of the object is described in a similar way too. What leads Hulme to resist calling his account fully Schopenhauerian is that he believes Bergson's theory is more metaphysically streamlined: 'both want to convey over the same feeling about art. But Schopenhauer demands such a cumbrous machinery in order to get that feeling out

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[...] In Bergson it is an actual contact with reality in a man who is emancipated from the ways of perception engendered by action, but the action is written with a small “a”, not a large one’ (Hulme 1994, 194).

Hulme therefore ends up with a notion of the ‘image’, which bears countless resemblances to Schopenhauer’s ‘Idea’, but is intended to be less metaphysically problematic. The reading of Schopenhauer that regards the Ideas as excessively metaphysical had come to Hulme from Bergson himself, who at one point in Hulme’s life acted as a kind of mentor to him, as well as from the French psychologist Théodule Ribot, who had attempted to reconstruct Schopenhauer’s thought using only naturalised psychological claims in his *La Philosophie de Schopenhauer* (Rae 1989, 76-81; Jones 2001, 28). However, there are now those who argue that the Ideas reside neither in the noumenal realm, nor in a troubling third ontological category between will and representation. Rather they are obtained by, and consist in the result of, a special kind of attentive attitude towards representation (Young 1987). Compare this passage, to which commentators of this persuasion often draw attention, with the quotation from Hulme that follows it: ‘it plucks the object of its contemplation from the stream of the world’s course, and holds it isolated before it. This particular thing, which in that stream was an infinitesimal part, becomes for art a representative of the whole, and equivalent of the infinitely many in space and time’ (*WWR* I 185); ‘It is as if the surface of our mind was a sea in a continual state of motion, that there were so many waves upon it [...] that one was unable to perceive them. The artist by making a fixed model of one of these transient waves enables you to isolate it out and to perceive it in yourself’ (Hulme 1994, 195). Hulme was perhaps even more indebted to Schopenhauer than he had been led to believe.

Few British philosophers were as interested in Schopenhauer as the British literary tradition proved to be (for more of Schopenhauer’s impact on British literature, see Bishop 2012, 342 and Magee 1997, 403-17). Bertrand Russell accused Schopenhauer of being insincere because of the obvious contrast between his charmed lifestyle, on the one hand, and his philosophical recommendation of asceticism, on the other. He claimed that Schopenhauer system was ultimately characterised by ‘inconsistency and a certain shallowness’ (Russell 1946, 787). A notable philosopher who did take Schopenhauer seriously, however, was Iris Murdoch.

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As a prolific novelist, Murdoch could easily rank among Schopenhauer's legion of admirers in British literature; nevertheless, her interpretation of Schopenhauer is as subtle and as accurate as that of any good scholar. It is also inventively put to the ends that she had as a philosopher in her own right. She praises Schopenhauer for heralding one of the central claims of her *Metaphysics as Guide to Morals*, which is that questions of morality require not ethical, but metaphysical answers. Quoting Schopenhauer (*BM* 144-5), she says, 'The ultimate foundation of morality in human nature itself "cannot again [after Schopenhauer's explanation] be a problem of *ethics*, but rather, like everything that exists *as such*, of *metaphysics*"' (Murdoch 1992, 64. Murdoch's insertion and emphasis). A moral sentiment such as compassion, Murdoch argues, is an 'ultimate [...] aspect of human nature', and as such the proper question to ask about it is not whether we ought to exhibit it—presumably, when it happens, we have no choice—but what, metaphysically speaking, makes it possible, and in certain circumstances, necessary. That Schopenhauer thought that the compassionate aspect of human nature remained 'the great mystery of ethics' was not disappointing to Murdoch. In fact, she was happy to agree. In the 'event' of compassionate behaviour, Schopenhauer argues, 'we see abolished the partition which [...] absolutely separates one being from another; the non-ego has to a certain extent become the ego' (*BM* 144). The 'mystery of ethics' is only ever dispelled for those with such rare intuitive insight, and so moral experience is never directly understood from the outside. Following the early Wittgenstein, who in this respect is also indebted to Schopenhauer (*Tractatus* 6.42-6.423), Murdoch concludes that mysticism is inherent within moral experience, especially that of the religious variety (Murdoch 1992, 70).

That morality is a metaphysical circumstance of human beings, rather than a decided choice, and that it consists in a transformation of consciousness which is outwardly mystical, undoubtedly left a permanent impression on Murdoch's thought. This is not to say that she was uncritical of Schopenhauer, however. For example, Murdoch was dissatisfied that the eternal and timeless form of knowledge with which the Idea is supposed to furnish us in aesthetic experience appears to make little room for certain literary arts, which will often 'pursue the busy contingent rather than the still icon' (Murdoch 1992, 58-60). Murdoch also observes an interesting tension in Schopenhauer in a way that is strongly reminiscent of Oxenford's initial assessment.

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She is drawn to the conflict of the man who seems so invigorated and enchanted by a world he nevertheless denounces as monstrous and contemptible. Nothing could be in starker contrast to Schopenhauer's grim message than his style, which Murdoch brilliantly summarises as 'insatiable omnivorous muddled cheerful often casual volubility' (Murdoch 1992, 80). 'In spite of his metaphysics and his mysticism,' Murdoch comments, 'Schopenhauer may in general appear as a genial empiricist' (Murdoch 1992, 77). But Murdoch does not treat the conflict between the style and the content of Schopenhauer's work as evidence of his insincerity; nor does she reject its content in favour of his style, because unlike Oxenford she does not take herself to be speaking on behalf of a nation that endorses contrary principles. Quite correctly, she allows it to remain a part of Schopenhauer's appeal, in virtue of which he appears as 'a kindly teacher or fellow seeker' (Murdoch 1992, 80).

British scholars, like British philosophers, were for a long time relatively quiet about Schopenhauer—at least by comparison to the enduring interest in other leading German philosophers. For the majority of the 20th century, students and scholars interested in Schopenhauer had three British monographs from which to choose: Frederick Copleston's *Arthur Schopenhauer: Philosopher of Pessimism* (1947), Patrick Gardiner's *Schopenhauer* (1963), and D. W. Hamlyn's *Schopenhauer* (1980). However, in the 1980s and early 1990s, renewed interest in Schopenhauer among scholars in the United States created a boom of English language research on Schopenhauer. The British counterpart to this interest begins with the work of Christopher Janaway. After publishing *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy* (1989), Janaway released a number of other important monographs and collections on Schopenhauer's philosophy. The most recent collection *Better Consciousness* (2009), co-edited with Alex Neill, brings together the papers delivered as part of a major international conference on Schopenhauer's philosophy of value held at the University of Southampton in 2007. The philosophy of value is a prominent direction in which recent research on Schopenhauer in Britain has been moving. This includes the value of aesthetic experience according to Schopenhauer, his accounts of sexual love and compassion, the nature of his philosophical pessimism, and even his political philosophy, which has arguably been the least impactful aspect of his thought. At the time of writing, a collaborative translation project with Janaway as general editor is underway, with a number of titles released already.



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