

Schopenhauer's Lutheran Pedigree

Dennis Vanden Auweele

The atheist philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer is not readily associated with theological discussions. Nevertheless, his works are replete with positive references to numerous theologians such as Augustine, Meister Eckhart and, interestingly, Martin Luther. Any positive influence of the theologian of the Reformation who emphasized literalism, fideism and unmerited grace with the atheist, pessimistic and misanthropic sage of Frankfurt seems somewhat of a far stretch. If we take Schopenhauer's positive references to Luther seriously, we can find three areas in which Luther's theology might have impacted positively on Schopenhauer. First, Luther's understanding of the bondage of the will which necessitates external assistance seems to resonate with the way Schopenhauer understands the soteriological potential of knowledge to quell the will to life. Second, Luther's removal of a hermeneutic assistant in reading the bible – such as the Catholic Church – comes close to how Schopenhauer thinks the truth of pessimism is crystal clear to anyone uninfluenced by academic, philosophical optimism. Third, Luther's way of rendering all human works null in acquiring grace is similar to how Schopenhauer believes that the will itself lacks any soteriological principle.

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The positive influence of the theologian Martin Luther on the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer¹ is not widely recognized². This

¹ References to the work of Schopenhauer follow the *Sämtliche Werke* edition by Hübscher: A. Schopenhauer, *Sämtliche Werke in 7 Bänden*, ed. by Arthur Hübscher, Leipzig, F.A. Brockhaus, 1937. When available, translations are taken from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Schopenhauer*: A. Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings*, ed. by D. Cartwright, E. Erdmann and Chr. Janaway, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, abbreviated as VW (*Fourfold Root*) or WN (*On Will in Nature*); A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Volume 1*, ed. by J. Norman, A. Welchman and Chr. Janaway, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, abbreviated as WWV1; A. Schopenhauer, *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, ed. by Chr. Janaway, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, abbreviated as BGE; A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation. Volume II*, transl. by D. Carus and R. Aquila, Upper Saddle River, Prentice Hall, 2011, abbreviated as WWV2; A. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena. Volume 1*, transl. and ed. by Chr. Janaway and S. Roehr, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, abbreviated as PP1; A. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena. Volume 2*, transl. and ed. by Chr. Janaway and A. Del Caro, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, abbreviated as PP2.

² A few noteworthy exceptions are as follows: W. Dietz, *Servum arbitrium. Zur Konzeption der Willensunfreiheit bei Luther, Schopenhauer und Kierkegaard*, «Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie», 42 (2000), pp. 181-194; M. Kossler, *Empirische Ethik und christliche Moral. Zur Differenz einer areligiösen und einer religiösen Grundlegung der*