Schopenhauer workshop

Keynote: Brackenridge Distinguish Visiting Professor Christopher Janaway (University of Southampton) Thursday November 7th, 4:30-6 Pecan Room (UC 2.01.26)

Abstract

This paper examines Schopenhauer's concepts of Geschlechtsliebe (sexual love) and Menschenliebe (loving kindness). Both are forms of 'love', but they play very different roles in Schopenhauer's philosophy. Both play on the distinction between the individual and the greater whole, but serve opposite rhetorical strategies, which we can call a Disturbing Diagnosis of the condition of individuation and a Redemptive Remedy for it. Wagner's Tristan and Isolde was strongly influenced by Schopenhauer's views. But whereas Wagner hoped that what Schopenhauer calls sexual love between man and woman could be redemptive, Schopenhauer's own view is more complex and challenging. Sexual love exploits our egoistic desires, but for ends that have no value for the individual human being. Only the disinterested loving kindness is truly of value to the individual, but it is of value precisely because it prepares for a sense of self that frees it from identification with the individual human being in the state that Schopenhauer calls 'the self-negation of the will to life'.