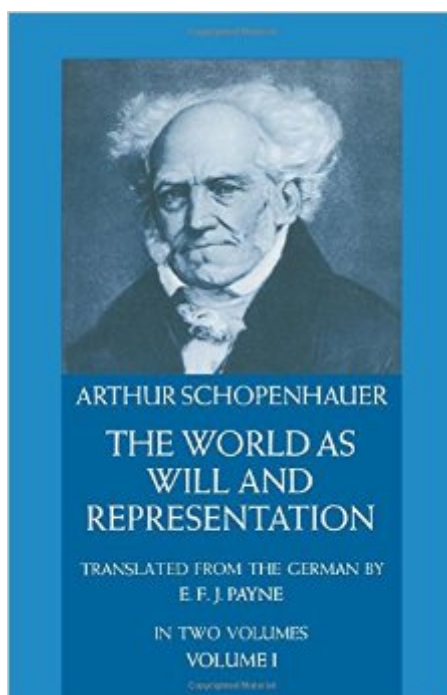


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The World As Will And Representation, Vol. 1



Synopsis

Arthur Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* is one of the most important philosophical works of the nineteenth century, the basic statement of one important stream of post-Kantian thought. It is without question Schopenhauer's greatest work. Conceived and published before the philosopher was 30 and expanded 25 years later, it is the summation of a lifetime of thought. For 70 years, the only unabridged English translation of this work was the Haldane-Kemp collaboration. In 1958, a new translation by E. F. J. Payne appeared that decisively supplanted the older one. Payne's translation is superior because it corrects nearly 1,000 errors and omissions in the Haldane-Kemp translation, and it is based on the definitive 1937 German edition of Schopenhauer's work prepared by Dr. Arthur HÃbscher. Payne's edition is the first to translate into English the text's many quotations in half a dozen languages. It is thus the most useful edition for the student or teacher.

Book Information

Paperback: 694 pages

Publisher: Dover Publications; Reprint Edition edition (June 1, 1966)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0486217612

ISBN-13: 978-0486217611

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 5.2 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 starsÂÂ See all reviewsÂ (46 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #49,566 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #26 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Free Will & Determinism #79 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Modern

Customer Reviews

If you are clever enough to shave away the nagging scientific details which have expired with time (as they all do), as well as the great philosopher's personal opinions, you will find this to be one of the greatest works ever written. For me, it was the end of philosophy; good answers to the questions I have always wrestled. An important thing to remember about Schopenhauer is that, as far as I know, he is the last great system-builder, the last philosopher in the traditional sense, who set out to create an entire picture of the world. His concept of the will, when fully grasped, is powerful and very simple. He is simply saying that there is one reality within all phenomenon, a

"blind, irresistible urge" in his words, manifesting itself as the world. It is a mind-blowing concept: that the hungers and desires that push and pull you along are actually the stirrings of the same "force" (for lack of a better word) that also reveals itself in such phenomenon as gravity, magnetism, and the very energy that composes all matter; and that this restless and indestructible power is your true being. The downside is that it is insatiable and forever striving, with no goal being final, and satisfaction an eternal delusion. The hardest part of this book to grasp is Schopenhauer's acceptance of transcendental idealism, which states that you only know the world through your five senses and your brain, and that therefore the objects you think you know directly have been conditioned by the process of perception, and are not things-in-themselves (this was Immanuel Kant's contribution to philosophy). It is not quite as difficult as it reads, and it may sound rather mystical until a proper understanding of what he is talking about strikes you unexpectedly one day. When it struck me I immediately re-read the book, and it was like reading it for the first time. Anybody familiar with "The Matrix" will be ahead of the crowd here, for the creators of that film were very familiar with Schopenhauer (in "The Matrix Reloaded," it is Schopenhauer's book (with the title in the original German) that the Persephone character pulls to open the door to the Keymaker). Just keep in mind that the world you perceive around you is most assuredly a mental construct (or mental picture) that is created by your brain from data conveyed by the nerves. It is not the world directly, it is a "representation" of the world. The only thing which is known to you directly (at least in part), is yourself, and therein lies the will, forever hungry, all of your emotions being its acts within the field of time. To properly grasp the idealistic half of his work (the world as representation), I strongly suggest the essay in vol. II called, "On the Fundamental View of Idealism."

Imagine this. You are in your car at 3 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon. It's hot. You're painfully lonely, you have no friends to speak of. The sun is beating on your face. You have absolutely nothing to do. You feel the pressure of time and consciousness. You hear an advertisement on the radio about another blow-out sale in a nearby mall. You want to scream. Sound familiar? This is when a nice cup of Arthur Schopenhauer is in order. I first learned about Schopenhauer when I was in a rather low point in my life and was looking for a consolation in the philosophy section of a bookstore. There I stumbled across *The Consolations of Philosophy*, which had a section about Schopenhauer and his basic outlook on the human condition. I never had a problem with pessimism and in fact always looked for someone great to defend it. Anyway, I slowly started preparing myself for the first volume. I had no philosophical background, just an immense desire to understand Schopenhauer's point of view since I knew then it would become my metaphysical backbone. One of the challenges was that

English is my second language and I feared that philosophy in English would exact too big a demand on my language skills. But the realization that with Schopenhauer lay the answers to my angst was enough to commit to this project. I first read *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, which I understood for the most part and became even more intrigued. I definitely gained some philosophical muscle and so I plunged into volume one shortly after. It took me three months and it was a rather grueling experience. Partly because of the terminology and new concepts, partly because of the style, partly because of the translation. As one of the readers noted, some of the Latin and Greek phrases are not translated, which infuriated me each time I encountered them. For crying out why? But all these problems are nothing compared with the immense pleasure I got from reading the work, which my body frequently heralded with goosebumps! I just finished the second volume (took me another 5 or 6 months). I read just a few pages a day. But I'll never regret spending the time. If there's an intellectual equivalent of orgasm, this is it. This experience will be forever etched in my brain. Transcendental idealism (which is also the basis of Buddhist metaphysics) is a life changing idea. I kind of look at myself and everything that happens to me through that lens now. One of the ideas that was always on the tip of my tongue and that I never was able to articulate even to myself is Schopenhauer's notion about the negativeness of happiness and positiveness of suffering. In other words, happiness is only a subtraction from suffering. Needs, discomfort and suffering is what we start from. Turns out Voltaire said it even more succinctly: "There are no great pleasures without great needs". To me it's a profound insight and both volumes are worth reading just because of this. If this idea does not give you goosebumps, then Schopenhauer might not be for you. Later I read Ann Ryand's "Atlas Shrugged", where that idea was attacked at least once -- but just as a bare assertion. By the way, "Atlas Shrugged" is the most tedious and crude attempt at realism (or objectivism) I ever read. But I'm digressing again. I do have a couple of gripes with Schopenhauer's style. Some sentences are REALLY long with sub-sentences and sometimes sub-sub-sentences. Sometimes, I needed to re-read them a dozen times. Also, Schopenhauer is surprisingly repetitive in places, which was also commented on by Magee. But if you think about it, in the age of no computers and fancy editors, it was probably difficult to spot repetition. On the flip side, I found the repetitiveness of his ideas helpful when a particular major concept was not clear, because sure enough he would describe it ten more times from slightly different angles. Schopenhauer says several times that everything that he had written must be read to fully understand his philosophy. He prescribes a list of his works to be read before "The World as Will and Representation" (TWAWR) is begun. The list includes: 1) His doctoral thesis. *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (Dodo Press). 2) His prize winning

essay.Â Schopenhauer: Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy).3)Â On the Basis of Morality4) His critique of Kant's philosophy at the end of volume one. I started with the critique of Kant and quickly abandoned it because it required a decent knowledge of Kant. By the way, Schopenhauer once said that he who hasn't read and understood Kant is a mere child. But I was not ready for Kant yet. So, I skipped Kant's critique and moved on to volume one. I can now say that at least a general idea about the fourfold principle of sufficient reason (FPSR) is required to fully get it. So, do yourself a favor, look it up and read at least a summary of it. Otherwise a lot of the meaning will be lost. But FPSR is all you really need to get started. By the time you finish TWAWR, even if you don't agree with his ideas, you will definitely be amazed by the sheer breadth of his knowledge. For starters, he spoke four foreign languages fluently -- English, French, Greek and Latin. His knowledge of science of that time is also quite staggering. He frequently provides his insight on physics, math, logic, astronomy, medicine (anatomy and physiology), botany, zoology, biology and chemistry. His knowledge of philosophy is similarly awesome. He constantly refers to and quotes Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Locke, Berkley, Kant and others. Fine arts? Sure! He had a lot to say about poetry, music, sculpture and architecture. In fact, he had something to say about everything that matters. To conclude, I love Schopenhauer. Too bad I can't thank him in person. To those who accuse him of pessimism, I can only say that just because something is pessimistic, doesn't mean it's not true. And Schopenhauer does make his case strong. Remember to look at your life through the prism of eternity. Hang in there, accept your lot and carry it with pride. Everything passes... Thank you, Arthur. ===== 9 years later ===== Shortly after reading Schopenhauer I plunged into learning Latin. I didn't like that I couldn't understand the quotes and Latin was a cool thing to learn anyway. I did that for about 3 years religiously. If you're bored like I was, Latin will keep you entertained for a LONG time :) I ended up reading some ancient authors in the original, which I consider an accomplishment. I got married and have a daughter now. But my philosophical outlook hasn't changed much. I'm re-reading Magee's introduction to Schopenhauer and am enjoying that again. Maybe I'll re-read Schopenhauer himself one more time at some point.

Schopenhauer proves that a German philosopher does not have to be nearly unintelligible to appear profound. Unlike Hegel and Heidegger, Schopenhauer does not hide behind ambiguous words or phrases. To the reader, Schopenhauer's views are as profound as they are clear. Starting where Kant left off, he gives new meaning to the word will; he makes will the thing in itself. Both volumes are essential reading. The first offers his entire system. From epistemology to metaphysics, to a

great essay on where his philosophy differs from Kant's, the first volume is the foundation for the second. The second volume is classic Schopenhauer; this is the acid-tongued curmudgeon most people think of when they bother to think of him at all. The sections on death and the metaphysics of sexual love are mind-blowing. As it is expressed in his masterpiece, *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer's genius and originality of thinking tower over the views of most thinkers being pushed in universities today.

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