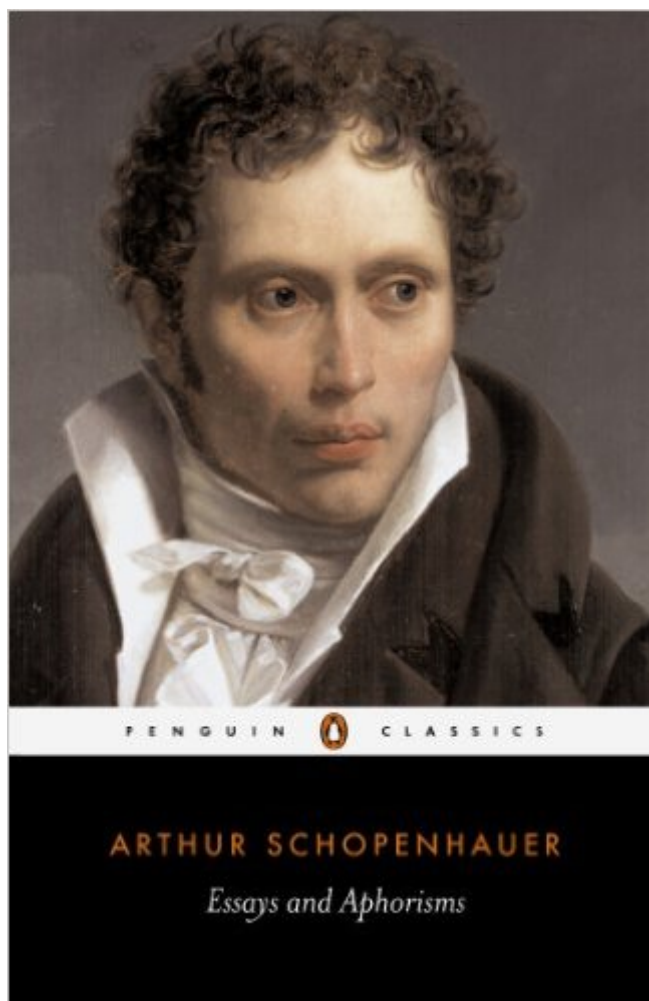


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# Essays And Aphorisms (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

This selection of thoughts on religion, ethics, politics, women, suicide, books, and much more is taken from Schopenhauer's last work, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, published in 1851. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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## Customer Reviews

Text: English, German (translation)

Arthur Schopenhauer was born in Danzig in 1788, where his family, of Dutch origin, owned one of the most respected trading houses. In 1793 the business moved to Hamburg, and in 1805 Arthur, who was expected to inherit it, was apprenticed as a clerk to another Hamburg house. He hated the work, so in 1807, two years after his father's suicide and the sale of the business, he enrolled at the grammar school at Gotha. In 1809 he entered Göttingen University to study medicine and science; the following year he took up philosophy. In 1811 he transferred to Berlin to write his

doctoral thesis (1813). During the next four years he lived in Dresden and wrote *The World as Will and Idea* (1818), a complete exposition of his philosophy. Although the book failed to sell, Schopenhauer's belief in his own philosophy sustained him through twenty-five years of frustrated desire for fame. During his middle life, he traveled widely in Europe. In 1844 he brought out a greatly expanded edition of his book, which after his death became one of the most widely read of all philosophical works. His fame was established in 1851 with the publication of *Parerga and Paralipomena*, a large collection of essays, dialogues and aphorisms. From 1833 until his death from a heart attack in 1860 he lived in Frankfurt-am-Main. R. J. Hollingdale has translated eleven of Nietzsche's books and published two books about him. He has also translated works by, among others, Schopenhauer, Goethe, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Lichtenberg and Theodor Fontane, many of these for the Penguin Classics. He is Honorary President of the British Nietzsche Society, and was for the Australian academic year 1991 Visiting Fellow at Trinity College, Melbourne.

This is one of the better books that I've read. Do not be worried if you are unfamiliar with *Metaphysics*, the book has an introduction which really introduces you to the author and the topics discussed. If you have no background in philosophy (like me) you'll be fine. The book is great because it is simply a collection of a smart man's thoughts. You can learn a lot really quickly since most of them are short and to the point. He covers many different topics that are not touched today like *Women and Suicide*. You won't agree with everything that is written, but you will be presented with a different perspective. (which is the point of the book)

Arthur Schopenhauer wrote his essays and aphorisms in the financial hub city of Frankfurt, Germany during the mid-nineteenth century, a world where business owners and financiers ruthlessly competed against one another to amass fortunes, clerks chained to their desks toiled twelve hours a day, uneducated day laborers ground themselves down into faceless, mindless cogs of the urban wheel, and upper class ladies strolled the streets with parasols as they chattered incessantly over petty concerns - but, no matter what one's station in life - ruthless financial baron, toiling clerk, chattering lady or manual drudge - the monotonous hum of this bustling society gave few people encouragement or mental space to think independently or reflect philosophically. But no hustle and bustle for Arthur. Inheriting the family fortune and thus freed from any obligation to work for a living, Schopenhauer became a life-long bachelor and independent scholar, keeping his distance from other people as if they were a colony of doltish, novel-reading lepers. And, thus, after rousing in the morning and before playing the flute, partaking of lunch, and going for his two hour

walk with his pet poodle, Schopenhauer sat at his desk, completely dedicating his time to writing. And this collection is Schopenhauer at his hyper-arrogant best, as self-appointed genius and highbrow aesthete, shooting verbal barbs and passing harsh judgment on everyone and everything in sight - would-be philosophers, journalists, bookworms, scholars, literati, historians, women, among numerous others. This book is great literature as well as original philosophy, the writing is so incredibly clear, crystal clear, actually - a straightforward, easy-to-follow, elegant prose. What a switch from hopelessly dry, turgid, stale academic philosophy with its endless references, footnotes and qualifications. On the topic of books and writing, here is a quote which is vintage Schopenhauer: "The thoughts a man is capable of always express themselves in clear, comprehensible and unambiguous words. Those who put together difficult, obscure, involved, ambiguous discourses do not really know what they want to say: they have no more than a vague consciousness of it which is only struggling towards a thought; often, however, they also want to conceal from themselves and others that they actually have nothing to say." Keep this in mind the next time you read an incomprehensible piece of writing - in truth, the burden is on the writer to make their thoughts clear, no matter how impressive the author's credentials. Among the topics addressed is aesthetics. As always, Schopenhauer never dances around an issue but goes right to the heart of the matter and tells it like it is. Here is what he has to say on opera: "Strictly speaking one could call opera an unmusical invention for the benefit of unmusical minds." For anybody with a keen interest in listening to music, these words have a very honest ring. Here is a quote that is especially appropriate to our current age of information: "Students and learned men of every kind and every age go as a rule in search of information, not insight. They make it a point of honor to have information about everything . . . When I see how much these well-informed people know, I sometimes say to myself: Oh, how little such a one must have had to think about, since he has had so much time for reading!" The truth of this statement is compounded with the omnipresence of the internet. One more quote, this one capsulizing Schopenhauer's famous pessimistic view of life: "No rose without a thorn. But many a thorn without a rose." Even if you don't agree, you have to admire a brilliant, memorable metaphor. If you are new to Schopenhauer or philosophy, R. J. Hollindale provides an introduction which includes a mini-history of philosophy leading up to Schopenhauer, the cultural, literary and social context of Germany in the nineteenth century, as well as a mini-biography of Schopenhauer. This will be all you will need to have a rich appreciation for one of the most lucid and influential philosophers in the Western tradition.

For those of you who do not wish to engage in the undertaking that is his magnum opus "The World

as Will and Representation, this collection is what I suggest for you. Schopenhauer was a tremendous thinker, and perhaps the greatest interpreter of Kant's extremely complex ideas. His personal writings are a bit much to digest, and I believe it even caused me to become depressed for a while. I would not recommend his works for young men, it is for mature men. Overall I deeply admire, and consider Schopenhauer to be an essential read for anyone interested in Philosophy. This collection of works is a huge asset due to it being comprised of short passages and essays to randomly reflect upon. The book itself is well constructed and text perfectly clear. The intro alone by R.J. Hollingdale is well worth the cost. Mr. Hollingdale provides the most concise summary on the history of philosophy I have ever read. Loved this from cover to cover.

i feel like it could be translated much better. there is a sharp contrast in the way chapters about "thing in itself" or deep philosophical subjects are written and the way chapters about women, suicide, or things the translator maybe understands more. at times it can even take on a "campy" tone, if that makes sense. overall i liked it but some of the wording didn't make sense to me and i think that is the fault of the translator

A little Schopenhauer will go a long way. Too much will lead to possible suicide (ya, that was a joke). He is dark, to be sure, but also very spot on with regards to human nature. Schopenhauer does speak truth regardless if one wishes to hear (read) it or not. It is sad to imagine lecturing to empty rooms, but sadder yet to know people never read/heard his thoughts. He can be classified as an equal to Seneca - perhaps the darker side of Seneca, but Seneca nonetheless. Schopenhauer just had a different position in society.

Best.

The two people I found most interesting in Durant's Story of Philosophy were Schopenhauer and Spinoza. Reading Spinoza kind of scares me so I decided to read Schopenhauer first. I don't really know very much about philosophy and don't know the correct way to approach these texts. For the most part I don't see the world the same way as him, he's far too negative, but I do find his writing interesting. He's also extremely sexist or perhaps just plain anti female, I'd sometimes show his anti women remarks to my girlfriend while grinning just to get a rise out of her. As for the book itself, Hollingdale seems to have done a good translation, or at least it seemed very readable. The biggest negatives are there are very few textual notes and sometimes the non German text wasn't

translated.

This is philosophy as it should be. Not only this, but the text I had (an older copy, though I'm sure the newer editions is fine as well - I've had a good experience with Penguin over the years) is great. This is one of the texts I would introduce to any student or lover of philosophy.

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