

**THE WISDOM OF LIFE,  
BEING THE FIRST  
PART OF APHORISMEN  
ZUR LEBENSWEISHEIT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649031603

The Wisdom of Life, Being the First Part of Aphorismen zur Lebensweisheit by Arthur Schopenhauer

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER**

**THE WISDOM OF LIFE,  
BEING THE FIRST  
PART OF APHORISMEN  
ZUR LEBENSWEISHEIT**



## THE WISDOM OF LIFE.

*Le bonheur n'est pas chose aisée: il est très-difficile de le trouver en nous, et impossible de le trouver ailleurs.*

CHAMFORT.

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

SCHOPENHAUER is one of the few philosophers who can be generally understood without a commentary. All his theories claim to be drawn direct from the facts, to be suggested by observation, and to interpret the world as it is; and whatever view he takes, he is constant in his appeal to the experience of common life. This characteristic endows his style with a freshness and vigour which would be difficult to match in the philosophical writing of any country, and impossible in that of Germany. If it were asked whether there were any circumstances, apart from heredity, to which he owed his mental habit, the answer might be found in the abnormal character of his early education, his acquaintance with the world rather than with books, the extensive travels of his boyhood, his ardent pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and without regard to the emoluments and endowments of learning. He was trained in realities even more than in ideas; and hence he is original, forcible, clear, an enemy of all philosophic indefiniteness and obscurity; so that it may well be said of him, in the words of a writer in the "*Revue Contemporaine*," *ce n'est pas un philosophe*

*comme les autres, c'est un philosophe qui a vu le monde.*

It is not my purpose, nor would it be possible within the limits of a prefatory note, to attempt an account of Schopenhauer's philosophy, to indicate its sources, or to suggest or rebut the objections which may be taken to it. M. Ribot, in his excellent little book,\* has done all that is necessary in this direction. But the essays here presented need a word of explanation. It should be observed, and Schopenhauer himself is at pains to point out, that his system is like a citadel with a hundred gates: at whatever point you take it up, wherever you make your entrance, you are on the road to the centre. In this respect his writings resemble a series of essays composed in support of a single thesis; a circumstance which led him to insist, more emphatically even than most philosophers, that for a proper understanding of his system it was necessary to read every line he had written. Perhaps it would be more correct to describe *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* as his main thesis, and his other treatises as merely corollary to it. The essays in these volumes form part of the corollary; they are taken from a collection published towards the close of Schopenhauer's life, and by him entitled *Parerga und Paralipomena*, as being in the nature of surplusage and illustrative of his main position. They are by far

\* *La Philosophie de Schopenhauer*, par Th. Ribot.

the most popular of his works, and since their first publication in 1851 they have done much to build up his fame. Written so as to be intelligible enough in themselves, the tendency of many of them is towards the fundamental idea on which his system is based. It may therefore be convenient to summarise that idea in a couple of sentences; more especially as Schopenhauer sometimes writes as if his advice had been followed and his readers were acquainted with the whole of his work.

All philosophy is in some sense the endeavour to find a unifying principle, to discover the most general conception underlying the whole field of nature and of knowledge. By one of those bold generalisations which occasionally mark a real advance in science, Schopenhauer conceived this unifying principle, this underlying unity, to consist in something analogous to that *will* which self-consciousness reveals to us. *Will* is, according to him, the fundamental reality of the world, the thing-in-itself; and its objectivation is what is presented in phenomena. The struggle of the will to realise itself evolves the organism, which in its turn evolves intelligence as the servant of the will. And in practical life the antagonism between the will and the intellect arises from the fact that the former is the metaphysical substance, the latter something accidental and secondary. And further, will is *desire*, that is to say, need of something; hence need and

Klein's  
St. 3. 6  
1876  
1000  
y. 3. 1. 1



pain are what is positive in the world, and the only possible happiness is a negation, a renunciation of *the will to live*.

It is instructive to note, as M. Ribot points out, that in finding the origin of all things, not in intelligence, as some of his predecessors in philosophy had done, but in will, or the force of nature, from which all phenomena have developed, Schopenhauer was anticipating something of the scientific spirit of the nineteenth century. To this it may be added that in combating the method of Fichte and Hegel, who spun a system out of abstract ideas, and in discarding it for one based on observation and experience, Schopenhauer can be said to have brought down philosophy from heaven to earth.

In Schopenhauer's view the various forms of Religion are no less a product of human ingenuity than Art or Science. He holds, in effect, that all religions take their rise in the desire to explain the world; and that, in regard to truth and error, they differ, in the main, not by preaching monotheism, polytheism or pantheism, but in so far as they recognise pessimism or optimism as the true description of life. Hence any religion which looked upon the world as being radically evil appealed to him as containing an indestructible element of truth. I have endeavoured to present his view of two of the great religions of the world in the extract which comes

in the third volume, and to which I have given the title of *The Christian System*. The tenor of it is to show that, however little he may have been in sympathy with the supernatural element, he owed much to the moral doctrines of Christianity and of Buddhism, between which he traced great resemblance.

Of Schopenhauer, as of many another writer, it may be said that he has been misunderstood and depreciated just in the degree in which he is thought to be new; and that, in treating of the Conduct of Life, he is, in reality, valuable only in so far as he brings old truths to remembrance. His name used to arouse, and in certain quarters still arouses, a vague sense of alarm; as though he had come to subvert all the rules of right thinking and all the principles of good conduct, rather than to proclaim once again and give a new meaning to truths with which the world has long been familiar. Of his philosophy in its more technical aspects, as matter upon which enough, perhaps, has been written, no account need be taken here, except as it affects the form in which he embodies these truths or supplies the fresh light in which he sees them. For whatever claims to originality his metaphysical theory may possess, the chief interest to be found in his views of life is an affair of form rather than of substance; and he stands in a sphere of his own, not because he sets new problems or opens

up undiscovered truths, but in the manner in which he approaches what has been already revealed.

He is not on that account less important; for the great mass of men at all times requires to have old truths imparted as if they were new—formulated, as it were, directly for them as individuals, and of special application to their own circumstances in life. A discussion of human happiness and the way to obtain it is never either unnecessary or uncalled for, if one looks to the extent to which the lives of most men fall short of even a poor ideal, or, again, to the difficulty of reaching any definite and secure conclusion. For to such a momentous inquiry as this, the vast majority of mankind gives nothing more than a nominal consideration, accepting the current belief, whatever it may be, on authority, and taking as little thought of the grounds on which it rests as a man walking takes of the motion of the earth. But for those who are not indifferent—for those whose desire to fathom the mystery of existence gives them the right to be called thinking beings—it is just here, in regard to the conclusion to be reached, that a difficulty arises, a difficulty affecting the conduct of life: for while the great facts of existence are alike for all, they are variously appreciated, and conclusions differ, chiefly from innate diversity of temperament in those who draw them. It is innate temperament, acting on a view of the facts necessarily incomplete, that has