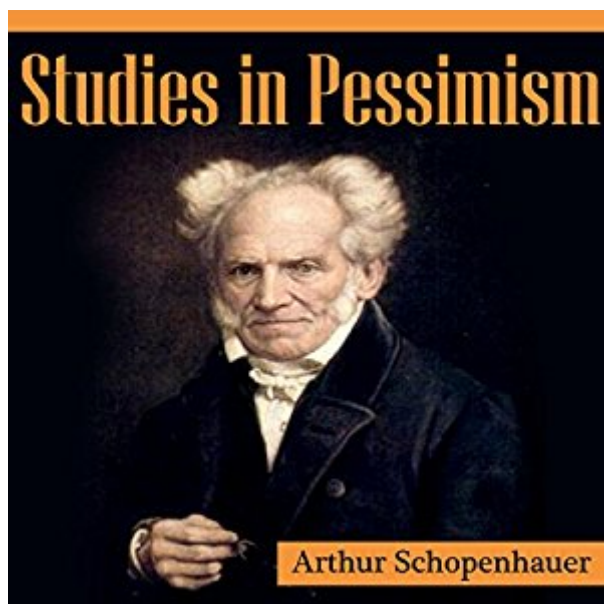


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Studies In Pessimism



Synopsis

Unless suffering is the direct and immediate object of life, our existence must entirely fail of its aim. It is absurd to look upon the enormous amount of pain that abounds everywhere in the world - and which originates in needs and necessities inseparable from life itself - as serving no purpose at all, and as the result of mere chance. Each separate misfortune, as it comes, seems, no doubt, to be something exceptional, but misfortune in general is the rule. I know of no greater absurdity than that propounded by most systems of philosophy in declaring evil to be negative in its character. Evil is just what is positive; it makes its own existence felt. Leibniz is particularly concerned to defend this absurdity, and he seeks to strengthen his position by using a palpable and paltry sophism. It is the good that is negative. In other words: Happiness and satisfaction always imply some desire fulfilled, some state of pain brought to an end.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I like Schopenhauer although his philosophy and metaphysics, which is called absolute voluntaristic idealism, hasn't fared that well in the last 100 years, although when I was in college 30 years ago he seemed to be popular among the students I knew who enjoyed reading philosophy. There are several reasons why Schopenhauer's thought is still important. An idealist like Kant, he kept Kant's distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal, between the mental and external representations of reality. Kant's defense of idealism, that some ideas or at least mental processes are innate, is still relevant in modern brain science and neurobiology and in Chomsky's theories in linguistics, especially in regard to Chomsky's ideas about language learning and acquisition, in

which there is support from brain science for a built-in facility in humans for language, and possibly an innate syntactical generator component to language ability. Although innate ideas probably don't exist in the way that Kant envisioned them, modern brain science has supported his theory that the mind or brain is actively involved in the organizing and structuring of the data from the senses, and that we couldn't make sense of reality if we didn't have inborn aptitudes and capabilities to do that. Schopenhauer emphasized the importance of Eastern philosophy and the validity of its introspective methods, while maintaining his overall empirical approach. His moral and ethical philosophy is based on compassion rather than on practical and reasonable considerations like Kant's. He was probably the first important western philosopher to give credit to Zen and Buddhist thought, while remaining faithful to the empirical principles of science.

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