

# АРТУР ШОПЕНГАУЭР

ESSAYS OF  
SCHOPENHAUER

Артур Шопенгауэр  
**Essays of Schopenhauer**

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## Содержание

PRELIMINARY	5
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE	7
ESSAYS OF SCHOPENHAUER.	15
ON NOISE	26
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	30

# Arthur Schopenhauer

## Essays of Schopenhauer

### PRELIMINARY

When Schopenhauer was asked where he wished to be buried, he answered, "Anywhere; they will find me;" and the stone that marks his grave at Frankfort bears merely the inscription "Arthur Schopenhauer," without even the date of his birth or death. Schopenhauer, the pessimist, had a sufficiently optimistic conviction that his message to the world would ultimately be listened to – a conviction that never failed him during a lifetime of disappointments, of neglect in quarters where perhaps he would have most cherished appreciation; a conviction that only showed some signs of being justified a few years before his death. Schopenhauer was no opportunist; he was not even conciliatory; he never hesitated to declare his own faith in himself, in his principles, in his philosophy; he did not ask to be listened to as a matter of courtesy but as a right – a right for which he would struggle, for which he fought, and which has in the course of time, it may be admitted, been conceded to him.

Although everything that Schopenhauer wrote was written more or less as evidence to support his main philosophical thesis, his unifying philosophical principle, the essays in this volume have an interest, if not altogether apart, at least of a sufficiently independent interest to enable them to be considered on their own merits, without relation to his main idea. And in dissociating them, if one may do so for a moment (their author would have scarcely permitted it!), one feels that one enters a field of criticism in which opinions can scarcely vary. So far as his philosophy is concerned, this unanimity does not exist; he is one of the best abused amongst philosophers; he has many times been explained and condemned exhaustively, and no doubt this will be as many times repeated. What the trend of his underlying philosophical principal was, his metaphysical explanation of the world, is indicated in almost all the following essays, but chiefly in the "Metaphysics of Love," to which the reader may be referred.

These essays are a valuable criticism of life by a man who had a wide experience of life, a man of the world, who possessed an almost inspired faculty of observation. Schopenhauer, of all men, unmistakably observed life at first hand. There is no academic echo in his utterances; he is not one of a school; his voice has no formal intonation; it is deep, full-chested, and rings out its words with all the poignancy of individual emphasis, without bluster, but with unfailing conviction. He was for his time, and for his country, an adept at literary form; but he used it only as a means. Complicated as his sentences occasionally are, he says many sharp, many brilliant, many epigrammatic things, he has the manner of the famous essayists, he is paradoxical (how many of his paradoxes are now truisms!); one fancies at times that one is almost listening to a creation of Molière, but these fireworks are not merely a literary display, they are used to illumine what he considers to be the truth. *Rien n'est beau que le vrai; le vrai seul est aimable*, he quotes; he was a deliberate and diligent searcher after truth, always striving to attain the heart of things, to arrive at a knowledge of first principles. It is, too, not without a sort of grim humour that this psychological vivisectionist attempts to lay bare the skeleton of the human mind, to tear away all the charming little sentiments and hypocrisies which in the course of time become a part and parcel of human life. A man influenced by such motives, and possessing a frank and caustic tongue, was not likely to attain any very large share of popular favour or to be esteemed a companionable sort of person. The fabric of social life is interwoven with a multitude of delicate evasions, of small hypocrisies, of matters of tinsel sentiment; social intercourse would be impossible, if it were not so. There is no sort of social existence possible for a person who is ingenuous enough to say always what he thinks, and, on the whole, one may be thankful that there is not. One naturally enough objects to form the subject of a critical diagnosis and exposure; one

chooses for one's friends the agreeable hypocrites of life who sustain for one the illusions in which one wishes to live. The mere conception of a plain-speaking world is calculated to reduce one to the last degree of despair; it is the conception of the intolerable. Nevertheless it is good for mankind now and again to have a plain speaker, a "mar feast," on the scene; a wizard who devises for us a spectacle of disillusionment, and lets us for a moment see things as he honestly conceives them to be, and not as we would have them to be. But in estimating the value of a lesson of this sort, we must not be carried too far, not be altogether convinced. We may first take into account the temperament of the teacher; we may ask, is his vision perfect? We may indulge in a trifling diagnosis on our own account. And in an examination of this sort we find that Schopenhauer stands the test pretty well, if not with complete success. It strikes us that he suffers perhaps a little from a hereditary taint, for we know that there is an unmistakable predisposition to hypochondria in his family; we know, for instance, that his paternal grandmother became practically insane towards the end of her life, that two of her children suffered from some sort of mental incapacity, and that a third, Schopenhauer's father, was a man of curious temper and that he probably ended his own life. He himself would also have attached some importance, in a consideration of this sort, to the fact, as he might have put it, that his mother, when she married, acted in the interests of the individual instead of unconsciously fulfilling the will of the species, and that the offspring of the union suffered in consequence. Still, taking all these things into account, and attaching to them what importance they may be worth, one is amazed at the clearness of his vision, by his vigorous and at moments subtle perception. If he did not see life whole, what he did see he saw with his own eyes, and then told us all about it with unmistakable veracity, and for the most part simply, brilliantly. Too much importance cannot be attached to this quality of seeing things for oneself; it is the stamp of a great and original mind; it is the principal quality of what one calls genius.

In possessing Schopenhauer the world possesses a personality the richer; a somewhat garrulous personality it may be; a curiously whimsical and sensitive personality, full of quite ordinary superstitions, of extravagant vanities, selfish, at times violent, rarely generous; a man whom during his lifetime nobody quite knew, an isolated creature, self-absorbed, solely concerned in his elaboration of the explanation of the world, and possessing subtleties which for the most part escaped the perception of his fellows; at once a hermit and a boulevardier. His was essentially a great temperament; his whole life was a life of ideas, an intellectual life. And his work, the fruit of his life, would seem to be standing the test of all great work – the test of time. It is not a little curious that one so little realised in his own day, one so little lovable and so little loved, should now speak to us from his pages with something of the force of personal utterance, as if he were actually with us and as if we knew him, even as we know Charles Lamb and Izaak Walton, personalities of such a different calibre. And this man whom we realise does not impress us unfavourably; if he is without charm, he is surely immensely interesting and attractive; he is so strong in his intellectual convictions, he is so free from intellectual affectations, he is such an ingenuous egotist, so naïvely human; he is so mercilessly honest and independent, and, at times (one may be permitted to think), so mistaken.

**R.D.**

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Arthur Schopenhauer was born at No. 117 of the Heiligengeist Strasse, at Dantzic, on February 22, 1788. His parents on both sides traced their descent from Dutch ancestry, the great-grandfather of his mother having occupied some ecclesiastical position at Gorcum. Dr. Gwinner in his *Life* does not follow the Dutch ancestry on the father's side, but merely states that the great-grandfather of Schopenhauer at the beginning of the eighteenth century rented a farm, the Stuthof, in the neighbourhood of Dantzic. This ancestor, Andreas Schopenhauer, received here on one occasion an unexpected visit from Peter the Great and Catherine, and it is related that there being no stove in the chamber which the royal pair selected for the night, their host, for the purpose of heating it, set fire to several small bottles of brandy which had been emptied on the stone floor. His son Andreas followed in the footsteps of his father, combining a commercial career with country pursuits. He died in 1794 at Ohra, where he had purchased an estate, and to which he had retired to spend his closing years. His wife (the grandmother of Arthur) survived him for some years, although shortly after his death she was declared insane and incapable of managing her affairs. This couple had four sons: the eldest, Michael Andreas, was weak-minded; the second, Karl Gottfried, was also mentally weak and had deserted his people for evil companions; the youngest son, Heinrich Floris, possessed, however, in a considerable degree the qualities which his brothers lacked. He possessed intelligence, a strong character, and had great commercial sagacity; at the same time, he took a definite interest in intellectual pursuits, reading Voltaire, of whom he was more or less a disciple, and other French authors, possessing a keen admiration for English political and family life, and furnishing his house after an English fashion. He was a man of fiery temperament and his appearance was scarcely prepossessing; he was short and stout; he had a broad face and turned-up nose, and a large mouth. This was the father of our philosopher.

When he was thirty-eight, Heinrich Schopenhauer married, on May 16, 1785, Johanna Henriette Trosiener, a young lady of eighteen, and daughter of a member of the City Council of Dantzic. She was at this time an attractive, cultivated young person, of a placid disposition, who seems to have married more because marriage offered her a comfortable settlement and assured position in life, than from any passionate affection for her wooer, which, it is just to her to say, she did not profess. Heinrich Schopenhauer was so much influenced by English ideas that he desired that his first child should be born in England; and thither, some two years after their marriage, the pair, after making a *détour* on the Continent, arrived. But after spending some weeks in London Mrs. Schopenhauer was seized with home-sickness, and her husband acceded to her entreaties to return to Dantzic, where a child, the future philosopher, was shortly afterwards born. The first five years of the child's life were spent in the country, partly at the Stuthof which had formerly belonged to Andreas Schopenhauer, but had recently come into the possession of his maternal grandfather.

Five years after the birth of his son, Heinrich Schopenhauer, in consequence of the political crisis, which he seems to have taken keenly to heart, in the affairs of the Hanseatic town of Dantzic, transferred his business and his home to Hamburg, where in 1795 a second child, Adele, was born. Two years later, Heinrich, who intended to train his son for a business life, took him, with this idea, to Havre, by way of Paris, where they spent a little time, and left him there with M. Grégoire, a commercial connection. Arthur remained at Havre for two years, receiving private instruction with this man's son Anthime, with whom he struck up a strong friendship, and when he returned to Hamburg it was found that he remembered but few words of his mother-tongue. Here he was placed in one of the principal private schools, where he remained for three years. Both his parents, but especially his mother, cultivated at this time the society of literary people, and entertained at their house Klopstock and other notable persons. In the summer following his return home from Havre he accompanied his parents on a continental tour, stopping amongst other places at Weimar, where

he saw Schiller. His mother, too, had considerable literary tastes, and a distinct literary gift which, later, she cultivated to some advantage, and which brought her in the production of accounts of travel and fiction a not inconsiderable reputation. It is, therefore, not surprising that literary tendencies began to show themselves in her son, accompanied by a growing distaste for the career of commerce which his father wished him to follow. Heinrich Schopenhauer, although deprecating these tendencies, considered the question of purchasing a canonry for his son, but ultimately gave up the idea on the score of expense. He then proposed to take him on an extended trip to France, where he might meet his young friend Anthime, and then to England, if he would give up the idea of a literary calling, and the proposal was accepted.

In the spring of 1803, then, he accompanied his parents to London, where, after spending some time in sight-seeing, he was placed in the school of Mr. Lancaster at Wimbledon. Here he remained for three months, from July to September, laying the foundation of his knowledge of the English language, while his parents proceeded to Scotland. English formality, and what he conceived to be English hypocrisy, did not contrast favourably with his earlier and gayer experiences in France, and made an extremely unfavourable impression upon his mind; which found expression in letters to his friends and to his mother.

On returning to Hamburg after this extended excursion abroad, Schopenhauer was placed in the office of a Hamburg senator called Jenisch, but he was as little inclined as ever to follow a commercial career, and secretly shirked his work so that he might pursue his studies. A little later a somewhat unexplainable calamity occurred. When Dantzic ceased to be a free city, and Heinrich Schopenhauer at a considerable cost and monetary sacrifice transferred his business to Hamburg, the event caused him much bitterness of spirit. At Hamburg his business seems to have undergone fluctuations. Whether these further affected his spirit is not sufficiently established, but it is certain, however, that he developed peculiarities of manner, and that his temper became more violent. At any rate, one day in April 1805 it was found that he had either fallen or thrown himself into the canal from an upper storey of a granary; it was generally concluded that it was a case of suicide.

Schopenhauer was seventeen at the time of this catastrophe, by which he was naturally greatly affected. Although by the death of his father the influence which impelled him to a commercial career was removed, his veneration for the dead man remained with him through life, and on one occasion found expression in a curious tribute to his memory in a dedication (which was not, however, printed) to the second edition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. "That I could make use of and cultivate in a right direction the powers which nature gave me," he concludes, "that I could follow my natural impulse and think and work for countless others without the help of any one; for that I thank thee, my father, thank thy activity, thy cleverness, thy thrift and care for the future. Therefore I praise thee, my noble father. And every one who from my work derives any pleasure, consolation, or instruction shall hear thy name and know that if Heinrich Floris Schopenhauer had not been the man he was, Arthur Schopenhauer would have been a hundred times ruined."

The year succeeding her husband's death, Johanna Schopenhauer removed with her daughter to Weimar, after having attended to the settlement of her husband's affairs, which left her in possession of a considerable income. At Weimar she devoted herself to the pursuit of literature, and held twice a week a sort of salon, which was attended by Goethe, the two Schlegels, Wieland, Heinrich Meyer, Grimm, and other literary persons of note. Her son meanwhile continued for another year at the "dead timber of the desk," when his mother, acting under the advice of her friend Fernow, consented, to his great joy, to his following his literary bent.

During the next few years we find Schopenhauer devoting himself assiduously to acquiring the equipment for a learned career; at first at the Gymnasium at Gotha, where he penned some satirical verses on one of the masters, which brought him into some trouble. He removed in consequence to Weimar, where he pursued his classical studies under the direction of Franz Passow, at whose house he lodged. Unhappily, during his sojourn at Weimar his relations with his mother became strained.



One feels that there is a sort of autobiographical interest in his essay on women, that his view was largely influenced by his relations with his mother, just as one feels that his particular argument in his essay on education is largely influenced by the course of his own training.

On his coming of age Schopenhauer was entitled to a share of the paternal estate, a share which yielded him a yearly income of about £150. He now entered himself at the University of Göttingen (October 1809), enrolling himself as a student of medicine, and devoting himself to the study of the natural sciences, mineralogy, anatomy, mathematics, and history; later, he included logic, physiology, and ethnography. He had always been passionately devoted to music and found relaxation in learning to play the flute and guitar. His studies at this time did not preoccupy him to the extent of isolation; he mixed freely with his fellows, and reckoned amongst his friends or acquaintances, F.W. Kreise, Bunsen, and Ernst Schulze. During one vacation he went on an expedition to Cassel and to the Hartz Mountains. It was about this time, and partly owing to the influence of Schulze, the author of *Aenesidemus*, and then a professor at the University of Göttingen, that Schopenhauer came to realise his vocation as that of a philosopher.

During his holiday at Weimar he called upon Wieland, then seventy-eight years old, who, probably prompted by Mrs. Schopenhauer, tried to dissuade him from the vocation which he had chosen. Schopenhauer in reply said, "Life is a difficult question; I have decided to spend my life in thinking about it." Then, after the conversation had continued for some little time, Wieland declared warmly that he thought that he had chosen rightly. "I understand your nature," he said; "keep to philosophy." And, later, he told Johanna Schopenhauer that he thought her son would be a great man some day.

Towards the close of the summer of 1811 Schopenhauer removed to Berlin and entered the University. He here continued his study of the natural sciences; he also attended the lectures on the History of Philosophy by Schleiermacher, and on Greek Literature and Antiquities by F.A. Wolf, and the lectures on "Facts of Consciousness" and "Theory of Science" by Fichte, for the last of whom, as we know indeed from frequent references in his books, he had no little contempt. A year or so later, when the news of Napoleon's disaster in Russia arrived, the Germans were thrown into a state of great excitement, and made speedy preparations for war. Schopenhauer contributed towards equipping volunteers for the army, but he did not enter active service; indeed, when the result of the battle of Lützen was known and Berlin seemed to be in danger, he fled for safety to Dresden and thence to Weimar. A little later we find him at Rudolstadt, whither he had proceeded in consequence of the recurrence of differences with his mother, and remained there from June to November 1813, principally engaged in the composition of an essay, "A Philosophical Treatise on the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason," which he offered to the University of Jena as an exercise to qualify for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and for which a diploma was granted. He published this essay at his own cost towards the end of the year, but it seems to have fallen flatly from the press, although its arguments attracted the attention and the sympathy of Goethe, who, meeting him on his return to Weimar in November, discussed with him his own theory of colour. A couple of years before, Goethe, who was opposed to the Newtonian theory of light, had brought out his *Farbenlehre* (colour theory). In Goethe's diary Schopenhauer's name frequently occurs, and on the 24th November 1813 he wrote to Knebel: "Young Schopenhauer is a remarkable and interesting man... I find him intellectual, but I am undecided about him as far as other things go." The result of this association with Goethe was his *Ueber das Sehn und die Farben* ("On Vision and Colour"), published at Leipzig in 1816, a copy of which he forwarded to Goethe (who had already seen the MS.) on the 4th May of that year. A few days later Goethe wrote to the distinguished scientist, Dr. Seebeck, asking him to read the work. In Gwinner's *Life* we find the copy of a letter written in English to Sir C.L. Eastlake: "In the year 1830, as I was going to publish in Latin the same treatise which in German accompanies this letter, I went to Dr. Seebeck of the Berlin Academy, who is universally admitted to be the first natural philosopher (in the English sense of the word meaning physiker) of Germany; he is the discoverer of

thermo-electricity and of several physical truths. I questioned him on his opinion on the controversy between Goethe and Newton; he was extremely cautious and made me promise that I should not print and publish anything of what he might say, and at last, being hard pressed by me, he confessed that indeed Goethe was perfectly right and Newton wrong, but that he had no business to tell the world so. He has died since, the old coward!"

In May 1814 Schopenhauer removed from Weimar to Dresden, in consequence of the recurrence of domestic differences with his mother. This was the final break between the pair, and he did not see her again during the remaining twenty-four years of her life, although they resumed correspondence some years before her death. It were futile to attempt to revive the dead bones of the cause of these unfortunate differences between Johanna Schopenhauer and her son. It was a question of opposing temperaments; both and neither were at once to blame. There is no reason to suppose that Schopenhauer was ever a conciliatory son, or a companionable person to live with; in fact, there is plenty to show that he possessed trying and irritating qualities, and that he assumed an attitude of criticism towards his mother that could not in any circumstances be agreeable. On the other hand, Anselm Feuerbach in his *Memoirs* furnishes us with a scarcely prepossessing picture of Mrs. Schopenhauer: "Madame Schopenhauer," he writes, "a rich widow. Makes profession of erudition. Authoress. Prattles much and well, intelligently; without heart and soul. Self-complacent, eager after approbation, and constantly smiling to herself. God preserve us from women whose mind has shot up into mere intellect."

Schopenhauer meanwhile was working out his philosophical system, the idea of his principal philosophical work. "Under my hands," he wrote in 1813, "and still more in my mind grows a work, a philosophy which will be an ethics and a metaphysics in one: – two branches which hitherto have been separated as falsely as man has been divided into soul and body. The work grows, slowly and gradually aggregating its parts like the child in the womb. I became aware of one member, one vessel, one part after another. In other words, I set each sentence down without anxiety as to how it will fit into the whole; for I know it has all sprung from a single foundation. It is thus that an organic whole originates, and that alone will live... Chance, thou ruler of this sense-world! Let me live and find peace for yet a few years, for I love my work as the mother her child. When it is matured and has come to birth, then exact from me thy duties, taking interest for the postponement. But, if I sink before the time in this iron age, then grant that these miniature beginnings, these studies of mine, be given to the world as they are and for what they are: some day perchance will arise a kindred spirit, who can frame the members together and 'restore' the fragment of antiquity."<sup>1</sup>

By March 1817 he had completed the preparatory work of his system, and began to put the whole thing together; a year later *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung: vier Bücher, nebst einem Anhang, der die Kritik der Kantischen Philosophie enthält* ("The World as Will and Idea; four books, with an appendix containing a criticism on the philosophy of Kant"). Some delay occurring in the publication, Schopenhauer wrote one of his characteristically abusive letters to Brockhaus, his publisher, who retorted "that he must decline all further correspondence with one whose letters, in their divine coarseness and rusticity, savoured more of the cabman than of the philosopher," and concluded with a hope that his fears that the work he was printing would be good for nothing but waste paper, might not be realised.<sup>2</sup> The work appeared about the end of December 1818 with 1819 on the title-page. Schopenhauer had meanwhile proceeded in September to Italy, where he revised the final proofs. So far as the reception of the work was concerned there was reason to believe that the fears of Brockhaus would be realised, as, in fact, they came practically to be. But in the face of this general want of appreciation, Schopenhauer had some crumbs of consolation. His sister wrote to him in March (he was then staying at Naples) that Goethe "had received it with great joy, immediately cut the thick

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace's *Life*, pp. 95, 96.

<sup>2</sup> Wallace, p. 108.

book, and began *instantly* to read it. An hour later he sent me a note to say that he thanked you very much and thought that the whole book was good. He pointed out the most important passages, read them to us, and was greatly delighted. . . You are the only author whom Goethe has ever read seriously, it seems to me, and I rejoice." Nevertheless the book did not sell. Sixteen years later Brockhaus informed Schopenhauer that a large number of copies had been sold at waste paper price, and that he had even then a few in stock. Still, during the years 1842-43, Schopenhauer was contemplating the issue of a second edition and making revisions for that purpose; when he had completed the work he took it to Brockhaus, and agreed to leave the question of remuneration open. In the following year the second edition was issued (500 copies of the first volume, and 750 of the second), and for this the author was to receive no remuneration. "Not to my contemporaries," says Schopenhauer with fine conviction in his preface to this edition, "not to my compatriots – to mankind I commit my now completed work, in the confidence that it will not be without value for them, even if this should be late recognised, as is commonly the lot of what is good. For it cannot have been for the passing generation, engrossed with the delusion of the moment, that my mind, almost against my will, has uninterruptedly stuck to its work through the course of a long life. And while the lapse of time has not been able to make me doubt the worth of my work, neither has the lack of sympathy; for I constantly saw the false and the bad, and finally the absurd and senseless, stand in universal admiration and honour, and I bethought myself that if it were not the case, those who are capable of recognising the genuine and right are so rare that we may look for them in vain for some twenty years, then those who are capable of producing it could not be so few that their works afterwards form an exception to the perishableness of earthly things; and thus would be lost the reviving prospect of posterity which every one who sets before himself a high aim requires to strengthen him."<sup>3</sup>

When Schopenhauer started for Italy Goethe had provided him with a letter of introduction to Lord Byron, who was then staying at Venice, but Schopenhauer never made use of the letter; he said that he hadn't the courage to present himself. "Do you know," he says in a letter, "three great pessimists were in Italy at the same time – Byron, Leopardi, and myself! And yet not one of us has made the acquaintance of the other." He remained in Italy until June 1819, when he proceeded to Milan, where he received distressing news from his sister to the effect that a Dantzic firm, in which she and her mother had invested all their capital, and in which he himself had invested a little, had become bankrupt. Schopenhauer immediately proposed to share his own income with them. But later, when the defaulting firm offered to its creditors a composition of thirty per cent, Schopenhauer would accept nothing less than seventy per cent in the case of immediate payment, or the whole if the payment were deferred; and he was so indignant at his mother and sister falling in with the arrangement of the debtors, that he did not correspond with them again for eleven years. With reference to this affair he wrote: "I can imagine that from your point of view my behaviour may seem hard and unfair. That is a mere illusion which disappears as soon as you reflect that all I want is merely not to have taken from me what is most rightly and incontestably mine, what, moreover, my whole happiness, my freedom, my learned leisure depend upon; – a blessing which in this world people like me enjoy so rarely that it would be almost as unconscientious as cowardly not to defend it to the uttermost and maintain it by every exertion. You say, perhaps, that if all your creditors were of this way of thinking, I too should come badly off. But if all men thought as I do, there would be much more thinking done, and in that case probably there would be neither bankruptcies, nor wars, nor gaming tables."<sup>4</sup>

In July 1819, when he was at Heidelberg, the idea occurred to him of turning university lecturer, and took practical shape the following summer, when he delivered a course of lectures on philosophy at the Berlin University. But the experiment was not a success; the course was not completed through

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<sup>3</sup> Haldane and Kemp's *The World as Will and Idea*.

<sup>4</sup> Wallace, p. 145.

the want of attendance, while Hegel at the same time and place was lecturing to a crowded and enthusiastic audience. This failure embittered him, and during the next few years there is little of any moment in his life to record. There was one incident, however, to which his detractors would seem to have attached more importance than it was worth, but which must have been sufficiently disturbing to Schopenhauer – we refer to the Marquet affair. It appears on his returning home one day he found three women gossiping outside his door, one of whom was a seamstress who occupied another room in the house. Their presence irritated Schopenhauer (whose sensitiveness in such matters may be estimated from his essay "On Noise"), who, finding them occupying the same position on another occasion, requested them to go away, but the seamstress replied that she was an honest person and refused to move. Schopenhauer disappeared into his apartments and returned with a stick. According to his own account, he offered his arm to the woman in order to take her out; but she would not accept it, and remained where she was. He then threatened to put her out, and carried his threat into execution by seizing her round the waist and putting her out. She screamed, and attempted to return. Schopenhauer now pushed her out; the woman fell, and raised the whole house. This woman, Caroline Luise Marquet, brought an action against him for damages, alleging that he had kicked and beaten her. Schopenhauer defended his own case, with the result that the action was dismissed. The woman appealed, and Schopenhauer, who was contemplating going to Switzerland, did not alter his plans, so that the appeal was heard during his absence, the judgment reversed, and he was mulcted in a fine of twenty thalers. But the unfortunate business did not end here. Schopenhauer proceeded from Switzerland to Italy, and did not return to Berlin until May 1825. Caroline Marquet renewed her complaints before the courts, stating that his ill-usage had occasioned a fever through which she had lost the power of one of her arms, that her whole system was entirely shaken, and demanding a monthly allowance as compensation. She won her case; the defendant had to pay three hundred thalers in costs and contribute sixty thalers a year to her maintenance while she lived. Schopenhauer on returning to Berlin did what he could to get the judgment reversed, but unsuccessfully. The woman lived for twenty years; he inscribed on her death certificate, "*Obit anus, obit onus*"

The idea of marriage seems to have more or less possessed Schopenhauer about this time, but he could not finally determine to take the step. There is sufficient to show in the following essays in what light he regarded women. Marriage was a debt, he said, contracted in youth and paid off in old age. Married people have the whole burden of life to bear, while the unmarried have only half, was a characteristically selfish apothegm. Had not all the true philosophers been celibates – Descartes, Leibnitz, Malebranche, Spinoza, and Kant? The classic writers were of course not to be considered, because with them woman occupied a subordinate position. Had not all the great poets married, and with disastrous consequences? Plainly, Schopenhauer was not the person to sacrifice the individual to the will of the species.

In August 1831 he made a fortuitous expedition to Frankfort-on-the-Main – an expedition partly prompted by the outbreak of cholera at Berlin at the time, and partly by the portent of a dream (he was credulous in such matters) which at the beginning of the year had intimated his death. Here, however, he practically remained until his death, leading a quiet, mechanically regular life and devoting his thoughts to the development of his philosophic ideas, isolated at first, but as time went on enjoying somewhat greedily the success which had been denied him in his earlier days. In February 1839 he had a moment of elation when he heard from the Scientific Society of Drontheim that he had won the prize for the best essay on the question, "Whether free will could be proved from the evidence of consciousness," and that he had been elected a member of the Society; and a corresponding moment of despondency when he was informed by the Royal Danish Academy of the Sciences at Copenhagen, in a similar competition, that his essay on "Whether the source and foundation of ethics was to be sought in an intuitive moral idea, and in the analysis of other derivative moral conceptions, or in some other principle of knowledge," had failed, partly on the ground of the want of respect which it showed to the opinions of the chief philosophers. He published these essays

in 1841 under the title of "The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics," and ten years later *Parerga und Paralipomena* the composition of which had engaged his attention for five or six years. The latter work, which proved to be his most popular, was refused by three publishers, and when eventually it was accepted by Hayn of Berlin, the author only received ten free copies of his work as payment. It is from this book that all except one of the following essays have been selected; the exception is "The Metaphysics of Love," which appears in the supplement of the third book of his principal work. The second edition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* appeared in 1844, and was received with growing appreciation. Hitherto he had been chiefly known in Frankfort as the son of the celebrated Johanna Schopenhauer; now he came to have a following which, if at first small in numbers, were sufficiently enthusiastic, and proved, indeed, so far as his reputation was concerned, helpful. Artists painted his portrait; a bust of him was made by Elizabeth Ney. In the April number of the *Westminster Review* for 1853 John Oxenford, in an article entitled "Iconoclasm in German Philosophy," heralded in England his recognition as a writer and thinker; three years later Saint-René Taillandier, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, did a similar service for him in France. One of his most enthusiastic admirers was Richard Wagner, who in 1854 sent him a copy of his *Der Ring der Nibelungen*, with the inscription "In admiration and gratitude." The Philosophical Faculty of the University of Leipzig offered a prize for an exposition and criticism of his philosophical system. Two Frenchmen, M. Foucher de Careil and M. Challemel Lacour, who visited Schopenhauer during his last days, have given an account of their impressions of the interview, the latter in an article entitled, "Un Bouddhiste Contemporain en Allemagne," which appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for March 15th, 1870. M. Foucher de Careil gives a charming picture of him: – "Quand je le vis, pour la première fois, en 1859, à la table de l'hôtel d'Angleterre, à Francfort, c'était déjà un vieillard, à l'oeil d'un bleu vif et limpide, à la lèvre mince et légèrement sarcastique, autour de laquelle errait un fin sourire, et dont le vaste front, estompé de deux touffes de cheveux blancs sur les côtés, relevait d'un cachet de noblesse et de distinction la physionomie pétillante d'esprit et de malice. Les habits, son jabot de dentelle, sa cravate blanche rappelaient un vieillard de la fin du règne de Louis XV; ses manières étaient celles d'un homme de bonne compagnie. Habituellement réservé et d'un naturel craintif jusqu'à la méfiance, il ne se livrait qu'avec ses intimes ou les étrangers de passage à Francfort. Ses mouvements étaient vifs et devenaient d'une pétulance extraordinaire dans la conversation; il fuyait les discussions et les vains combats de paroles, mais c'était pour mieux jouir du charme d'une causerie intime. Il possédait et parlait avec une égale perfection quatre langues: le français, l'anglais, l'allemand, l'italien et passablement l'espagnol. Quand il causait, la verve du vieillard brodait sur le canevas un peu lourd de l'allemand ses brillantes arabesques latines, grecques, françaises, anglaises, italiennes. C'était un entrain, une précision et des saillies, une richesse de citations, une exactitude de détails qui faisait couler les heures; et quelquefois le petit cercle de ses intimes l'écoutait jusqu'à minuit, sans qu'un moment de fatigue se fût peint sur ses traits ou que le feu de son regard se fût un instant amorti. Sa parole nette et accentuée captivait l'auditoire: elle peignait et analysait tout ensemble; une sensibilité délicate en augmentait le feu; elle était exacte et précise sur toutes sortes de sujets."

Schopenhauer died on the 20th September 1860, in his seventy-third year, peacefully, alone as he had lived, but not without warning. One day in April, taking his usual brisk walk after dinner, he suffered from palpitation of the heart, he could scarcely breathe. These symptoms developed during the next few months, and Dr. Gwinner advised him to discontinue his cold baths and to breakfast in bed; but Schopenhauer, notwithstanding his early medical training, was little inclined to follow medical advice. To Dr. Gwinner, on the evening of the 18th September, when he expressed a hope that he might be able to go to Italy, he said that it would be a pity if he died now, as he wished to make several important additions to his *Parerga*; he spoke about his works and of the warm recognition with which they had been welcomed in the most remote places. Dr. Gwinner had never before found him so eager and gentle, and left him reluctantly, without, however, the least premonition that he had seen him for the last time. On the second morning after this interview Schopenhauer got up as usual, and

had his cold bath and breakfast. His servant had opened the window to let in the morning air and had then left him. A little later Dr. Gwinner arrived and found him reclining in a corner of the sofa; his face wore its customary expression; there was no sign of there having been any struggle with death. There had been no struggle with death; he had died, as he had hoped he would die, painlessly, easily.

In preparing the above notice the writer has to acknowledge her indebtedness to Dr. Gwinner's *Life* and Professor Wallace's little work on the same subject, as well as to the few other authorities that have been available. – THE TRANSLATOR.

## ESSAYS OF SCHOPENHAUER. ON AUTHORSHIP AND STYLE

There are, first of all, two kinds of authors: those who write for the subject's sake, and those who write for writing's sake. The first kind have had thoughts or experiences which seem to them worth communicating, while the second kind need money and consequently write for money. They think in order to write, and they may be recognised by their spinning out their thoughts to the greatest possible length, and also by the way they work out their thoughts, which are half-true, perverse, forced, and vacillating; then also by their love of evasion, so that they may seem what they are not; and this is why their writing is lacking in definiteness and clearness.

Consequently, it is soon recognised that they write for the sake of filling up the paper, and this is the case sometimes with the best authors; for example, in parts of Lessing's *Dramaturgie*, and even in many of Jean Paul's romances. As soon as this is perceived the book should be thrown away, for time is precious. As a matter of fact, the author is cheating the reader as soon as he writes for the sake of filling up paper; because his pretext for writing is that he has something to impart. Writing for money and preservation of copyright are, at bottom, the ruin of literature. It is only the man who writes absolutely for the sake of the subject that writes anything worth writing. What an inestimable advantage it would be, if, in every branch of literature, there existed only a few but excellent books! This can never come to pass so long as money is to be made by writing. It seems as if money lay under a curse, for every author deteriorates directly he writes in any way for the sake of money. The best works of great men all come from the time when they had to write either for nothing or for very little pay. This is confirmed by the Spanish proverb: *honra y provecho no caben en un saco* (Honour and money are not to be found in the same purse). The deplorable condition of the literature of to-day, both in Germany and other countries, is due to the fact that books are written for the sake of earning money. Every one who is in want of money sits down and writes a book, and the public is stupid enough to buy it. The secondary effect of this is the ruin of language.

A great number of bad authors eke out their existence entirely by the foolishness of the public, which only will read what has just been printed. I refer to journalists, who have been appropriately so-called. In other words, it would be "day labourer."

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Again, it may be said that there are three kinds of authors. In the first place, there are those who write without thinking. They write from memory, from reminiscences, or even direct from other people's books. This class is the most numerous. In the second, those who think whilst they are writing. They think in order to write; and they are numerous. In the third place, there are those who have thought before they begin to write. They write solely because they have thought; and they are rare.

Authors of the second class, who postpone their thinking until they begin to write, are like a sportsman who goes out at random – he is not likely to bring home very much. While the writing of an author of the third, the rare class, is like a chase where the game has been captured beforehand and cooped up in some enclosure from which it is afterwards set free, so many at a time, into another enclosure, where it is not possible for it to escape, and the sportsman has now nothing to do but to aim and fire – that is to say, put his thoughts on paper. This is the kind of sport which yields something.

But although the number of those authors who really and seriously think before they write is small, only extremely few of them think about *the subject itself*; the rest think only about the books written on this subject, and what has been said by others upon it, I mean. In order to think, they

must have the more direct and powerful incentive of other people's thoughts. These become their next theme, and therefore they always remain under their influence and are never, strictly speaking, original. On the contrary, the former are roused to thought through the *subject itself*, hence their thinking is directed immediately to it. It is only among them that we find the authors whose names become immortal. Let it be understood that I am speaking here of writers of the higher branches of literature, and not of writers on the method of distilling brandy.

It is only the writer who takes the material on which he writes direct out of his own head that is worth reading. Book manufacturers, compilers, and the ordinary history writers, and others like them, take their material straight out of books; it passes into their fingers without its having paid transit duty or undergone inspection when it was in their heads, to say nothing of elaboration. (How learned many a man would be if he knew everything that was in his own books!) Hence their talk is often of such a vague nature that one racks one's brains in vain to understand of *what* they are really thinking. They are not thinking at all. The book from which they copy is sometimes composed in the same way: so that writing of this kind is like a plaster cast of a cast of a cast, and so on, until finally all that is left is a scarcely recognisable outline of the face of Antinous. Therefore, compilations should be read as seldom as possible: it is difficult to avoid them entirely, since compendia, which contain in a small space knowledge that has been collected in the course of several centuries, are included in compilations.

No greater mistake can be made than to imagine that what has been written latest is always the more correct; that what is written later on is an improvement on what was written previously; and that every change means progress. Men who think and have correct judgment, and people who treat their subject earnestly, are all exceptions only. Vermin is the rule everywhere in the world: it is always at hand and busily engaged in trying to improve in its own way upon the mature deliberations of the thinkers. So that if a man wishes to improve himself in any subject he must guard against immediately seizing the newest books written upon it, in the assumption that science is always advancing and that the older books have been made use of in the compiling of the new. They have, it is true, been used; but how? The writer often does not thoroughly understand the old books; he will, at the same time, not use their exact words, so that the result is he spoils and bungles what has been said in a much better and clearer way by the old writers; since they wrote from their own lively knowledge of the subject. He often leaves out the best things they have written, their most striking elucidations of the matter, their happiest remarks, because he does not recognise their value or feel how pregnant they are. It is only what is stupid and shallow that appeals to him. An old and excellent book is frequently shelved for new and bad ones; which, written for the sake of money, wear a pretentious air and are much eulogised by the authors' friends. In science, a man who wishes to distinguish himself brings something new to market; this frequently consists in his denouncing some principle that has been previously held as correct, so that he may establish a wrong one of his own. Sometimes his attempt is successful for a short time, when a return is made to the old and correct doctrine. These innovators are serious about nothing else in the world than their own priceless person, and it is this that they wish to make its mark. They bring this quickly about by beginning a paradox; the sterility of their own heads suggests their taking the path of negation; and truths that have long been recognised are now denied – for instance, the vital power, the sympathetic nervous system, *generatio equivoca*, Bichat's distinction between the working of the passions and the working of intelligence, or they return to crass atomism, etc., etc. Hence *the course of science is often retrogressive*.

To this class of writers belong also those translators who, besides translating their author, at the same time correct and alter him, a thing that always seems to me impertinent. Write books yourself which are worth translating and leave the books of other people as they are. One should read, if it is possible, the real authors, the founders and discoverers of things, or at any rate the recognised great masters in every branch of learning, and buy second-hand *books* rather than read their *contents* in new ones.



It is true that *inventis aliquid addere facile est*, therefore a man, after having studied the principles of his subject, will have to make himself acquainted with the more recent information written upon it. In general, the following rule holds good here as elsewhere, namely: what is new is seldom good; because a good thing is only new for a short time.

What the address is to a letter the *title* should be to a book – that is, its immediate aim should be to bring the book to that part of the public that will be interested in its contents. Therefore, the title should be effective, and since it is essentially short, it should be concise, laconic, pregnant, and if possible express the contents in a word. Therefore a title that is prolix, or means nothing at all, or that is indirect or ambiguous, is bad; so is one that is false and misleading: this last may prepare for the book the same fate as that which awaits a wrongly addressed letter. The worst titles are those that are stolen, such titles that is to say that other books already bear; for in the first place they are a plagiarism, and in the second a most convincing proof of an absolute want of originality. A man who has not enough originality to think out a new title for his book will be much less capable of giving it new contents. Akin to these are those titles which have been imitated, in other words, half stolen; for instance, a long time after I had written "On Will in Nature," Oersted wrote "On Mind in Nature."

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A book can never be anything more than the impression of its author's thoughts. The value of these thoughts lies either in the *matter about which* he has thought, or in the *form* in which he develops his matter – that is to say, *what* he has thought about it.

The matter of books is very various, as also are the merits conferred on books on account of their matter. All matter that is the outcome of experience, in other words everything that is founded on fact, whether it be historical or physical, taken by itself and in its widest sense, is included in the term matter. It is the *motif* that gives its peculiar character to the book, so that a book can be important whoever the author may have been; while with form the peculiar character of a book rests with the author of it. The subjects may be of such a nature as to be accessible and well known to everybody; but the form in which they are expounded, *what* has been thought about them, gives the book its value, and this depends upon the author. Therefore if a book, from this point of view, is excellent and without a rival, so also is its author. From this it follows that the merit of a writer worth reading is all the greater the less he is dependent on matter – and the better known and worn out this matter, the greater will be his merit. The three great Grecian tragedians, for instance, all worked at the same subject.

So that when a book becomes famous one should carefully distinguish whether it is so on account of its matter or its form.

Quite ordinary and shallow men are able to produce books of very great importance because of their *matter*, which was accessible to them alone. Take, for instance, books which give descriptions of foreign countries, rare natural phenomena, experiments that have been made, historical events of which they were witnesses, or have spent both time and trouble in inquiring into and specially studying the authorities for them.

On the other hand, it is on *form* that we are dependent, where the matter is accessible to every one or very well known; and it is what has been thought about the matter that will give any value to the achievement; it will only be an eminent man who will be able to write anything that is worth reading. For the others will only think what is possible for every other man to think. They give the impress of their own mind; but every one already possesses the original of this impression.

However, the public is very much more interested in matter than in form, and it is for this very reason that it is behindhand in any high degree of culture. It is most laughable the way the public reveals its liking for matter in poetic works; it carefully investigates the real events or personal circumstances of the poet's life which served to give the *motif* of his works; nay, finally, it finds these

more interesting than the works themselves; it reads more about Goethe than what has been written by Goethe, and industriously studies the legend of Faust in preference to Goethe's *Faust* itself. And when Bürger said that "people would make learned expositions as to who Leonora really was," we see this literally fulfilled in Goethe's case, for we now have many learned expositions on Faust and the Faust legend. They are and will remain of a purely material character. This preference for matter to form is the same as a man ignoring the shape and painting of a fine Etruscan vase in order to make a chemical examination of the clay and colours of which it is made. The attempt to be effective by means of the matter used, thereby ministering to this evil propensity of the public, is absolutely to be censured in branches of writing where the merit must lie expressly in the form; as, for instance, in poetical writing. However, there are numerous bad dramatic authors striving to fill the theatre by means of the matter they are treating. For instance, they place on the stage any kind of celebrated man, however stripped of dramatic incidents his life may have been, nay, sometimes without waiting until the persons who appear with him are dead.

The distinction between matter and form, of which I am here speaking, is true also in regard to conversation. It is chiefly intelligence, judgment, wit, and vivacity that enable a man to converse; they give form to the conversation. However, the *matter* of the conversation must soon come into notice – in other words, *that* about which one can talk to the man, namely, his knowledge. If this is very small, it will only be his possessing the above-named formal qualities in a quite exceptionally high degree that will make his conversation of any value, for his matter will be restricted to things concerning humanity and nature, which are known generally. It is just the reverse if a man is wanting in these formal qualities, but has, on the other hand, knowledge of such a kind that it lends value to his conversation; this value, however, will then entirely rest on the matter of his conversation, for, according to the Spanish proverb, *mas sabe el necio en su casa, que el sabio en la agena*.

A thought only really lives until it has reached the boundary line of words; it then becomes petrified and dies immediately; yet it is as everlasting as the fossilised animals and plants of former ages. Its existence, which is really momentary, may be compared to a crystal the instant it becomes crystallised.

As soon as a thought has found words it no longer exists in us or is serious in its deepest sense.

When it begins to exist for others it ceases to live in us; just as a child frees itself from its mother when it comes into existence. The poet has also said:

"Ihr müsst mich nicht durch Widerspruch verwirren! *Sobald man spricht, beginnt man schon zu irren.*"

The pen is to thought what the stick is to walking, but one walks most easily without a stick, and thinks most perfectly when no pen is at hand. It is only when a man begins to get old that he likes to make use of a stick and his pen.

A hypothesis that has once gained a position in the mind, or been born in it, leads a life resembling that of an organism, in so far as it receives from the outer world matter only that is advantageous and homogeneous to it; on the other hand, matter that is harmful and heterogeneous to it is either rejected, or if it must be received, cast off again entirely.

Abstract and indefinite terms should be employed in satire only as they are in algebra, in place of concrete and specified quantities. Moreover, it should be used as sparingly as the dissecting knife on the body of a living man. At the risk of forfeiting his life it is an unsafe experiment.

For a work to become *immortal* it must possess so many excellences that it will not be easy to find a man who understands and values them *all*; so that there will be in all ages men who recognise and appreciate some of these excellences; by this means the credit of the work will be retained throughout the long course of centuries and ever-changing interests, for, as it is appreciated first in this sense, then in that, the interest is never exhausted.

An author like this, in other words, an author who has a claim to live on in posterity, can only be a man who seeks in vain his like among his contemporaries over the wide world, his marked distinction

making him a striking contrast to every one else. Even if he existed through several generations, like the wandering Jew, he would still occupy the same position; in short, he would be, as Ariosto has put it, *lo fece natura, e poi ruppe lo stampo*. If this were not so, one would not be able to understand why his thoughts should not perish like those of other men.

In almost every age, whether it be in literature or art, we find that if a thoroughly wrong idea, or a fashion, or a manner is in vogue, it is admired. Those of ordinary intelligence trouble themselves inordinately to acquire it and put it in practice. An intelligent man sees through it and despises it, consequently he remains out of the fashion. Some years later the public sees through it and takes the sham for what it is worth; it now laughs at it, and the much-admired colour of all these works of fashion falls off like the plaster from a badly-built wall: and they are in the same dilapidated condition. We should be glad and not sorry when a fundamentally wrong notion of which we have been secretly conscious for a long time finally gains a footing and is proclaimed both loudly and openly. The falseness of it will soon be felt and eventually proclaimed equally loudly and openly. It is as if an abscess had burst.

The man who publishes and edits an article written by an anonymous critic should be held as immediately responsible for it as if he had written it himself; just as one holds a manager responsible for bad work done by his workmen. In this way the fellow would be treated as he deserves to be – namely, without any ceremony.

An anonymous writer is a literary fraud against whom one should immediately cry out, "Wretch, if you do not wish to admit what it is you say against other people, hold your slanderous tongue."

An anonymous criticism carries no more weight than an anonymous letter, and should therefore be looked upon with equal mistrust. Or do we wish to accept the assumed name of a man, who in reality represents a *société anonyme*, as a guarantee for the veracity of his friends?

The little honesty that exists among authors is discernible in the unconscionable way they misquote from the writings of others. I find whole passages in my works wrongly quoted, and it is only in my appendix, which is absolutely lucid, that an exception is made. The misquotation is frequently due to carelessness, the pen of such people has been used to write down such trivial and banal phrases that it goes on writing them out of force of habit. Sometimes the misquotation is due to impertinence on the part of some one who wants to improve upon my work; but a bad motive only too often prompts the misquotation – it is then horrid baseness and roguery, and, like a man who commits forgery, he loses the character for being an honest man for ever.

Style is the physiognomy of the mind. It is a more reliable key to character than the physiognomy of the body. To imitate another person's style is like wearing a mask. However fine the mask, it soon becomes insipid and intolerable because it is without life; so that even the ugliest living face is better. Therefore authors who write in Latin and imitate the style of the old writers essentially wear a mask; one certainly hears what they say, but one cannot watch their physiognomy – that is to say their style. One observes, however, the style in the Latin writings of men *who think for themselves*, those who have not deigned to imitate, as, for instance, Scotus Erigena, Petrarch, Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, etc.

Affectation in style is like making grimaces. The language in which a man writes is the physiognomy of his nation; it establishes a great many differences, beginning from the language of the Greeks down to that of the Caribbean islanders.

We should seek for the faults in the style of another author's works, so that we may avoid committing the same in our own.

In order to get a provisional estimate of the value of an author's productions it is not exactly necessary to know the matter on which he has thought or what it is he has thought about it, – this would compel one to read the whole of his works, – but it will be sufficient to know *how* he has thought. His *style* is an exact expression of *how* he has thought, of the essential state and general *quality* of his thoughts. It shows the *formal* nature – which must always remain the same – of all the thoughts of a man, whatever the subject on which he has thought or what it is he has said about it. It is the dough out

of which all his ideas are kneaded, however various they may be. When Eulenspiegel was asked by a man how long he would have to walk before reaching the next place, and gave the apparently absurd answer *Walk*, his intention was to judge from the man's walking how far he would go in a given time. And so it is when I have read a few pages of an author, I know about how far he can help me.

In the secret consciousness that this is the condition of things, every mediocre writer tries to mask his own natural style. This instantly necessitates his giving up all idea of being *naïve*, a privilege which belongs to superior minds sensible of their superiority, and therefore sure of themselves. For instance, it is absolutely impossible for men of ordinary intelligence to make up their minds to write as they think; they resent the idea of their work looking too simple. It would always be of some value, however. If they would only go honestly to work and in a simple way express the few and ordinary ideas they have really thought, they would be readable and even instructive in their own sphere. But instead of that they try to appear to have thought much more deeply than is the case. The result is, they put what they have to say into forced and involved language, create new words and prolix periods which go round the thought and cover it up. They hesitate between the two attempts of communicating the thought and of concealing it. They want to make it look grand so that it has the appearance of being learned and profound, thereby giving one the idea that there is much more in it than one perceives at the moment. Accordingly, they sometimes put down their thoughts in bits, in short, equivocal, and paradoxical sentences which appear to mean much more than they say (a splendid example of this kind of writing is furnished by Schelling's treatises on Natural Philosophy); sometimes they express their thoughts in a crowd of words and the most intolerable diffuseness, as if it were necessary to make a sensation in order to make the profound meaning of their phrases intelligible – while it is quite a simple idea if not a trivial one (examples without number are supplied in Fichte's popular works and in the philosophical pamphlets of a hundred other miserable blockheads that are not worth mentioning), or else they endeavour to use a certain style in writing which it has pleased them to adopt – for example, a style that is so thoroughly *Kat' e'xochae'u* profound and scientific, where one is tortured to death by the narcotic effect of long-spun periods that are void of all thought (examples of this are specially supplied by those most impertinent of all mortals, the Hegelians in their Hegel newspaper commonly known as *Jahrbücher der wissenschaftlichen Literatur*); or again, they aim at an intellectual style where it seems then as if they wish to go crazy, and so on. All such efforts whereby they try to postpone the *nascetur ridiculus mus* make it frequently difficult to understand what they really mean. Moreover, they write down words, nay, whole periods, which mean nothing in themselves, in the hope, however, that some one else will understand something from them. Nothing else is at the bottom of all such endeavours but the inexhaustible attempt which is always venturing on new paths, to sell words for thoughts, and by means of new expressions, or expressions used in a new sense, turns of phrases and combinations of all kinds, to produce the appearance of intellect in order to compensate for the want of it which is so painfully felt. It is amusing to see how, with this aim in view, first this mannerism and then that is tried; these they intend to represent the mask of intellect: this mask may possibly deceive the inexperienced for a while, until it is recognised as being nothing but a dead mask, when it is laughed at and exchanged for another.

We find a writer of this kind sometimes writing in a dithyrambic style, as if he were intoxicated; at other times, nay, on the very next page, he will be high-sounding, severe, and deeply learned, prolix to the last degree of dullness, and cutting everything very small, like the late Christian Wolf, only in a modern garment. The mask of unintelligibility holds out the longest; this is only in Germany, however, where it was introduced by Fichte, perfected by Schelling, and attained its highest climax finally in Hegel, always with the happiest results. And yet nothing is easier than to write so that no one can understand; on the other hand, nothing is more difficult than to express learned ideas so that every one must understand them. All the arts I have cited above are superfluous if the writer really possesses any intellect, for it allows a man to show himself as he is and verifies for all time what Horace said: *Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons*.

But this class of authors is like certain workers in metal, who try a hundred different compositions to take the place of gold, which is the only metal that can never have a substitute. On the contrary, there is nothing an author should guard against more than the apparent endeavour to show more intellect than he has; because this rouses the suspicion in the reader that he has very little, since a man always affects something, be its nature what it may, that he does not really possess. And this is why it is praise to an author to call him naïve, for it signifies that he may show himself as he is. In general, naïveté attracts, while anything that is unnatural everywhere repels. We also find that every true thinker endeavours to express his thoughts as purely, clearly, definitely, and concisely as ever possible. This is why simplicity has always been looked upon as a token, not only of truth, but also of genius. Style receives its beauty from the thought expressed, while with those writers who only pretend to think it is their thoughts that are said to be fine because of their style. Style is merely the silhouette of thought; and to write in a vague or bad style means a stupid or confused mind.

Hence, the first rule – nay, this in itself is almost sufficient for a good style – is this, *that the author should have something to say*. Ah! this implies a great deal. The neglect of this rule is a fundamental characteristic of the philosophical, and generally speaking of all the reflective authors in Germany, especially since the time of Fichte. It is obvious that all these writers wish *to appear* to have something to say, while they have nothing to say. This mannerism was introduced by the pseudo-philosophers of the Universities and may be discerned everywhere, even among the first literary notabilities of the age. It is the mother of that forced and vague style which seems to have two, nay, many meanings, as well as of that prolix and ponderous style, *le stile empesé*; and of that no less useless bombastic style, and finally of that mode of concealing the most awful poverty of thought under a babble of inexhaustible chatter that resembles a clacking mill and is just as stupefying: one may read for hours together without getting hold of a single clearly defined and definite idea. The *Halleschen*, afterwards called the *Deutschen Jahrbücher*, furnishes almost throughout excellent examples of this style of writing. The Germans, by the way, from force of habit read page after page of all kinds of such verbiage without getting any definite idea of what the author really means: they think it all very proper and do not discover that he is writing merely for the sake of writing. On the other hand, a good author who is rich in ideas soon gains the reader's credit of having really and truly *something to say*; and this gives the intelligent reader patience to follow him attentively. An author of this kind will always express himself in the simplest and most direct manner, for the very reason that he really has something to say; because he wishes to awaken in the reader the same idea he has in his own mind and no other. Accordingly he will be able to say with Boileau —

"Ma pensée au grand jour partout s'offre et s'expose,

Et mon vers, bien ou mal, dit toujours quelque chose;"

while of those previously described writers it may be said, in the words of the same poet, *et qui parlant beaucoup ne disent jamais rien*. It is also a characteristic of such writers to avoid, if it is possible, expressing themselves *definitely*, so that they may be always able in case of need to get out of a difficulty; this is why they always choose the more *abstract* expressions: while people of intellect choose the more *concrete*; because the latter bring the matter closer to view, which is the source of all evidence. This preference for abstract expressions may be confirmed by numerous examples: a specially ridiculous example is the following. Throughout German literature of the last ten years we find "to condition" almost everywhere used in place of "to cause" or "to effect." Since it is more abstract and indefinite it says less than it implies, and consequently leaves a little back door open to please those whose secret consciousness of their own incapacity inspires them with a continual fear of all *definite* expressions. While with other people it is merely the effect of that national tendency to immediately imitate everything that is stupid in literature and wicked in life; this is shown in either case by the quick way in which it spreads. The Englishman depends on his own judgment both in what he writes and what he does, but this applies less to the German than to any other nation. In consequence of the state of things referred to, the words "to cause" and "to effect"

have almost entirely disappeared from the literature of the last ten years, and people everywhere talk of "to condition." The fact is worth mentioning because it is characteristically ridiculous. Everyday authors are only half conscious when they write, a fact which accounts for their want of intellect and the tediousness of their writings; they do not really themselves understand the meaning of their own words, because they take ready-made words and learn them. Hence they combine whole phrases more than words — *phrases banales*. This accounts for that obviously characteristic want of clearly defined thought; in fact, they lack the die that stamps their thoughts, they have no clear thought of their own; in place of it we find an indefinite, obscure interweaving of words, current phrases, worn-out terms of speech, and fashionable expressions. The result is that their foggy kind of writing is like print that has been done with old type. On the other hand, intelligent people *really* speak to us in their writings, and this is why they are able to both move and entertain us. It is only intelligent writers who place individual words together with a full consciousness of their use and select them with deliberation. Hence their style of writing bears the same relation to that of those authors described above, as a picture that is really painted does to one that has been executed with stencil. In the first instance every word, just as every stroke of the brush, has some special significance, while in the other everything is done mechanically. The same distinction may be observed in music. For it is the omnipresence of intellect that always and everywhere characterises the works of the genius; and analogous to this is Lichtenberg's observation, namely, that Garrick's soul was omnipresent in all the muscles of his body. With regard to the tediousness of the writings referred to above, it is to be observed in general that there are two kinds of tediousness – an objective and a subjective. The *objective* form of tediousness springs from the deficiency of which we have been speaking – that is to say, where the author has no perfectly clear thought or knowledge to communicate. For if a writer possesses any clear thought or knowledge it will be his aim to communicate it, and he will work with this end in view; consequently the ideas he furnishes are everywhere clearly defined, so that he is neither diffuse, unmeaning, nor confused, and consequently not tedious. Even if his fundamental idea is wrong, yet in such a case it will be clearly thought out and well pondered; in other words, it is at least formally correct, and the writing is always of some value. While, for the same reason, a work that is objectively *tedious* is at all times without value. Again, *subjective* tediousness is merely relative: this is because the reader is not interested in the subject of the work, and that what he takes an interest in is of a very limited nature. The most excellent work may therefore be tedious subjectively to this or that person, just as, *vice vers*, the worst work may be subjectively diverting to this or that person: because he is interested in either the subject or the writer of the book.

It would be of general service to German authors if they discerned that while a man should, if possible, think like a great mind, he should speak the same language as every other person. Men should use common words to say uncommon things, but they do the reverse. We find them trying to envelop trivial ideas in grand words and to dress their very ordinary thoughts in the most extraordinary expressions and the most outlandish, artificial, and rarest phrases. Their sentences perpetually stalk about on stilts. With regard to their delight in bombast, and to their writing generally in a grand, puffed-up, unreal, hyperbolic, and acrobatic style, their prototype is Pistol, who was once impatiently requested by Falstaff, his friend, to "say what you have to say, *like a man of this world!*"<sup>5</sup>

There is no expression in the German language exactly corresponding to *stile empesé*; but the thing itself is all the more prevalent. When combined with unnaturalness it is in works what affected gravity, grandness, and unnaturalness are in social intercourse; and it is just as intolerable. Poverty of intellect is fond of wearing this dress; just as stupid people in everyday life are fond of assuming gravity and formality.

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<sup>5</sup> Schopenhauer here gives an example of this bombastic style which would be of little interest to English readers. – TRANSLATOR.

A man who writes in this *preziös* style is like a person who dresses himself up to avoid being mistaken for or confounded with the mob; a danger which a *gentleman*, even in his worst clothes, does not run. Hence just as a plebeian is recognised by a certain display in his dress and his *tiré à quatre épingles*, so is an ordinary writer recognised by his style.

If a man has something to say that is worth saying, he need not envelop it in affected expressions, involved phrases, and enigmatical innuendoes; but he may rest assured that by expressing himself in a simple, clear, and naïve manner he will not fail to produce the right effect. A man who makes use of such artifices as have been alluded to betrays his poverty of ideas, mind, and knowledge.

Nevertheless, it is a mistake to attempt to write exactly as one speaks. Every style of writing should bear a certain trace of relationship with the monumental style, which is, indeed, the ancestor of all styles; so that to write as one speaks is just as faulty as to do the reverse, that is to say, to try and speak as one writes. This makes the author pedantic, and at the same time difficult to understand.

Obscurity and vagueness of expression are at all times and everywhere a very bad sign. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they arise from vagueness of thought, which, in its turn, is almost always fundamentally discordant, inconsistent, and therefore wrong. When a right thought springs up in the mind it strives after clearness of expression, and it soon attains it, for clear thought easily finds its appropriate expression. A man who is capable of thinking can express himself at all times in clear, comprehensible, and unambiguous words. Those writers who construct difficult, obscure, involved, and ambiguous phrases most certainly do not rightly know what it is they wish to say: they have only a dull consciousness of it, which is still struggling to put itself into thought; they also often wish to conceal from themselves and other people that in reality they have nothing to say. Like Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, they wish to appear to know what they do not know, to think what they do not think, and to say what they do not say.

Will a man, then, who has something real to impart endeavour to say it in a clear or an indistinct way? Quintilian has already said, *plerumque accidit ut faciliora sint ad intelligendum et lucidiora multo, quae a doctissimo quoque dicuntur... Erit ergo etiam obscurior, quo quisque deterior.*

A man's way of expressing himself should not be *enigmatical*, but he should know whether he has something to say or whether he has not. It is an uncertainty of expression which makes German writers so dull. The only exceptional cases are those where a man wishes to express something that is in some respect of an illicit nature. As anything that is far-fetched generally produces the reverse of what the writer has aimed at, so do words serve to make thought comprehensible; but only up to a certain point. If words are piled up beyond this point they make the thought that is being communicated more and more obscure. To hit that point is the problem of style and a matter of discernment; for every superfluous word prevents its purpose being carried out. Voltaire means this when he says: *l'adjectif est l'ennemi du substantif*. (But, truly, many authors try to hide their poverty of thought under a superfluity of words.)

Accordingly, all prolixity and all binding together of unmeaning observations that are not worth reading should be avoided. A writer must be sparing with the reader's time, concentration, and patience; in this way he makes him believe that what he has before him is worth his careful reading, and will repay the trouble he has spent upon it. It is always better to leave out something that is good than to write down something that is not worth saying. Hesiod's *πλέον ἡμῖν πάντος*<sup>6</sup> finds its right application. In fact, not to say everything! *Le secret pour être ennuyeux, c'est de tout dire*. Therefore, if possible, the quintessence only! the chief matter only! nothing that the reader would think for himself. The use of many words in order to express little thought is everywhere the infallible sign of mediocrity; while to clothe much thought in a few words is the infallible sign of distinguished minds.

Truth that is naked is the most beautiful, and the simpler its expression the deeper is the impression it makes; this is partly because it gets unobstructed hold of the hearer's mind without his

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<sup>6</sup> *Opera et dies*, v. 40.

being distracted by secondary thoughts, and partly because he feels that here he is not being corrupted or deceived by the arts of rhetoric, but that the whole effect is got from the thing itself. For instance, what declamation on the emptiness of human existence could be more impressive than Job's: *Homo, natus de muliere, brevis vivit tempore, repletus multis miseriis, qui, tanquam flos, egreditur et conteritur, et fugit velut umbra*. It is for this very reason that the naïve poetry of Goethe is so incomparably greater than the rhetorical of Schiller. This is also why many folk-songs have so great an effect upon us. An author should guard against using all unnecessary rhetorical adornment, all useless amplification, and in general, just as in architecture he should guard against an excess of decoration, all superfluity of expression – in other words, he must aim at *chastity* of style. Everything that is redundant has a harmful effect. The law of simplicity and naïveté applies to all fine art, for it is compatible with what is most sublime.

True brevity of expression consists in a man only saying what is worth saying, while avoiding all diffuse explanations of things which every one can think out for himself; that is, it consists in his correctly distinguishing between what is necessary and what is superfluous. On the other hand, one should never sacrifice clearness, to say nothing of grammar, for the sake of being brief. To impoverish the expression of a thought, or to obscure or spoil the meaning of a period for the sake of using fewer words shows a lamentable want of judgment. And this is precisely what that false brevity nowadays in vogue is trying to do, for writers not only leave out words that are to the purpose, but even grammatical and logical essentials.<sup>7</sup>

*Subjectivity*, which is an error of style in German literature, is, through the deteriorated condition of literature and neglect of old languages, becoming more common. By *subjectivity* I mean when a writer thinks it sufficient for himself to know what he means and wants to say, and it is left to the reader to discover what is meant. Without troubling himself about his reader, he writes as if he were holding a monologue; whereas it should be a dialogue, and, moreover, a dialogue in which he must express himself all the more clearly as the questions of the reader cannot be heard. And it is for this very reason that style should not be subjective but objective, and for it to be objective the words must be written in such a way as to directly compel the reader to think precisely the same as the author thought. This will only be the case when the author has borne in mind that thoughts, inasmuch as they follow the law of gravity, pass more easily from head to paper than from paper to head. Therefore the journey from paper to head must be helped by every means at his command. When he does this his words have a purely objective effect, like that of a completed oil painting; while the subjective style is not much more certain in its effect than spots on the wall, and it is only the man whose fantasy is accidentally aroused by them that sees figures; other people only see blurs. The difference referred to applies to every style of writing as a whole, and it is also often met with in particular instances; for example, I read in a book that has just been published: *I have not written to increase the number of existing books*. This means exactly the opposite of what the writer had in view, and is nonsense into the bargain.

A man who writes carelessly at once proves that he himself puts no great value on his own thoughts. For it is only by being convinced of the truth and importance of our thoughts that there arises in us the inspiration necessary for the inexhaustible patience to discover the clearest, finest, and most powerful expression for them; just as one puts holy relics or priceless works of art in silver or golden receptacles. It was for this reason that the old writers – whose thoughts, expressed in their own words, have lasted for thousands of years and hence bear the honoured title of classics – wrote with universal care. Plato, indeed, is said to have written the introduction to his *Republic* seven times with different modifications. On the other hand, the Germans are conspicuous above all other nations for neglect of style in writing, as they are for neglect of dress, both kinds of slovenliness which have their

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<sup>7</sup> Schopenhauer here at length points out various common errors in the writing and speaking of German which would lose significance in a translation. – TR.



source in the German national character. Just as neglect of dress betrays contempt for the society in which a man moves, so does a hasty, careless, and bad style show shocking disrespect for the reader, who then rightly punishes it by not reading the book.

## ON NOISE

Kant has written a treatise on *The Vital Powers*; but I should like to write a dirge on them, since their lavish use in the form of knocking, hammering, and tumbling things about has made the whole of my life a daily torment. Certainly there are people, nay, very many, who will smile at this, because they are not sensitive to noise; it is precisely these people, however, who are not sensitive to argument, thought, poetry or art, in short, to any kind of intellectual impression: a fact to be assigned to the coarse quality and strong texture of their brain tissues. On the other hand, in the biographies or in other records of the personal utterances of almost all great writers, I find complaints of the pain that noise has occasioned to intellectual men. For example, in the case of Kant, Goethe, Lichtenberg, Jean Paul; and indeed when no mention is made of the matter it is merely because the context did not lead up to it. I should explain the subject we are treating in this way: If a big diamond is cut up into pieces, it immediately loses its value as a whole; or if an army is scattered or divided into small bodies, it loses all its power; and in the same way a great intellect has no more power than an ordinary one as soon as it is interrupted, disturbed, distracted, or diverted; for its superiority entails that it concentrates all its strength on one point and object, just as a concave mirror concentrates all the rays of light thrown upon it. Noisy interruption prevents this concentration. This is why the most eminent intellects have always been strongly averse to any kind of disturbance, interruption and distraction, and above everything to that violent interruption which is caused by noise; other people do not take any particular notice of this sort of thing. The most intelligent of all the European nations has called "Never interrupt" the eleventh commandment. But noise is the most impertinent of all interruptions, for it not only interrupts our own thoughts but disperses them. Where, however, there is nothing to interrupt, noise naturally will not be felt particularly. Sometimes a trifling but incessant noise torments and disturbs me for a time, and before I become distinctly conscious of it I feel it merely as the effort of thinking becomes more difficult, just as I should feel a weight on my foot; then I realise what it is.

But to pass from *genus* to *species*, the truly infernal cracking of whips in the narrow resounding streets of a town must be denounced as the most unwarrantable and disgraceful of all noises. It deprives life of all peace and sensibility. Nothing gives me so clear a grasp of the stupidity and thoughtlessness of mankind as the tolerance of the cracking of whips. This sudden, sharp crack which paralyses the brain, destroys all meditation, and murders thought, must cause pain to any one who has anything like an idea in his head. Hence every crack must disturb a hundred people applying their minds to some activity, however trivial it may be; while it disjoins and renders painful the meditations of the thinker; just like the executioner's axe when it severs the head from the body. No sound cuts so sharply into the brain as this cursed cracking of whips; one feels the prick of the whip-cord in one's brain, which is affected in the same way as the *mimosa pudica* is by touch, and which lasts the same length of time. With all respect for the most holy doctrine of utility, I do not see why a fellow who is removing a load of sand or manure should obtain the privilege of killing in the bud the thoughts that are springing up in the heads of about ten thousand people successively. (He is only half-an-hour on the road.)

Hammering, the barking of dogs, and the screaming of children are abominable; but it is *only* the cracking of a whip that is the true murderer of thought. Its object is to destroy every favourable moment that one now and then may have for reflection. If there were no other means of urging on an animal than by making this most disgraceful of all noises, one would forgive its existence. But it is quite the contrary: this cursed cracking of whips is not only unnecessary but even useless. The effect that it is intended to have on the horse mentally becomes quite blunted and ineffective; since the constant abuse of it has accustomed the horse to the crack, he does not quicken his pace for it. This is especially noticeable in the unceasing crack of the whip which comes from an empty vehicle as it

is being driven at its slowest rate to pick up a fare. The slightest touch with the whip would be more effective. Allowing, however, that it were absolutely necessary to remind the horse of the presence of the whip by continually cracking it, a crack that made one hundredth part of the noise would be sufficient. It is well known that animals in regard to hearing and seeing notice the slightest indications, even indications that are scarcely perceptible to ourselves. Trained dogs and canary birds furnish astonishing examples of this. Accordingly, this cracking of whips must be regarded as something purely wanton; nay, as an impudent defiance, on the part of those who work with their hands, offered to those who work with their heads. That such infamy is endured in a town is a piece of barbarity and injustice, the more so as it could be easily removed by a police notice requiring every whip cord to have a knot at the end of it. It would do no harm to draw the proletariat's attention to the classes above him who work with their heads; for he has unbounded fear of any kind of head work. A fellow who rides through the narrow streets of a populous town with unemployed post-horses or cart-horses, unceasingly cracking with all his strength a whip several yards long, instantly deserves to dismount and receive five really good blows with a stick. If all the philanthropists in the world, together with all the legislators, met in order to bring forward their reasons for the total abolition of corporal punishment, I would not be persuaded to the contrary.

But we can see often enough something that is even still worse. I mean a carter walking alone, and without any horses, through the streets incessantly cracking his whip. He has become so accustomed to the crack in consequence of its unwarrantable toleration. Since one looks after one's body and all its needs in a most tender fashion, is the thinking mind to be the only thing that never experiences the slightest consideration or protection, to say nothing of respect? Carters, sack-bearers (porters), messengers, and such-like, are the beasts of burden of humanity; they should be treated absolutely with justice, fairness, forbearance and care, but they ought not to be allowed to thwart the higher exertions of the human race by wantonly making a noise. I should like to know how many great and splendid thoughts these whips have cracked out of the world. If I had any authority, I should soon produce in the heads of these carters an inseparable *nexus idearum* between cracking a whip and receiving a whipping.

Let us hope that those nations with more intelligence and refined feelings will make a beginning, and then by force of example induce the Germans to do the same.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, hear what Thomas Hood says of them (*Up the Rhine*): "*For a musical people they are the most noisy I ever met with*" That they are so is not due to their being more prone to making a noise than other people, but to their insensibility, which springs from obtuseness; they are not disturbed by it in reading or thinking, because they do not think; they only smoke, which is their substitute for thought. The general toleration of unnecessary noise, for instance, of the clashing of doors, which is so extremely ill-mannered and vulgar, is a direct proof of the dulness and poverty of thought that one meets with everywhere. In Germany it seems as though it were planned that no one should think for noise; take the inane drumming that goes on as an instance. Finally, as far as the literature treated of in this chapter is concerned, I have only one work to recommend, but it is an excellent one: I mean a poetical epistle in *terzo rimo* by the famous painter Bronzino, entitled "*De' Romori: a Messer Luca Martini*" It describes fully and amusingly the torture to which one is put by the many kinds of noises of a small Italian town. It is written in tragicomic style. This epistle is to be found in *Opere burlesche del Berni, Aretino ed altri*, vol. ii. p. 258, apparently published in Utrecht in 1771.

The nature of our intellect is such that *ideas* are said to spring by abstraction from *observations*, so that the latter are in existence before the former. If this is really what takes place, as is the case with a man who has merely his own experience as his teacher and book, he knows quite well which of his observations belong to and are represented by each of his ideas; he is perfectly acquainted with

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<sup>8</sup> According to a notice from the Munich Society for the Protection of Animals, the superfluous whipping and cracking were strictly forbidden in Nuremberg in December 1858.

both, and accordingly he treats everything correctly that comes before his notice. We might call this the natural mode of education.

On the other hand, an artificial education is having one's head crammed full of ideas, derived from hearing others talk, from learning and reading, before one has anything like an extensive knowledge of the world as it is and as one sees it. The observations which produce all these ideas are said to come later on with experience; but until then these ideas are applied wrongly, and accordingly both things and men are judged wrongly, seen wrongly, and treated wrongly. And so it is that education perverts the mind; and this is why, after a long spell of learning and reading, we enter the world, in our youth, with views that are partly simple, partly perverted; consequently we comport ourselves with an air of anxiety at one time, at another of presumption. This is because our head is full of ideas which we are now trying to make use of, but almost always apply wrongly. This is the result of ὑστερον προτερον (putting the cart before the horse), since we are directly opposing the natural development of our mind by obtaining ideas first and observations last; for teachers, instead of developing in a boy his faculties of discernment and judgment, and of thinking for himself, merely strive to stuff his head full of other people's thoughts. Subsequently, all the opinions that have sprung from misapplied ideas have to be rectified by a lengthy experience; and it is seldom that they are completely rectified. This is why so few men of learning have such sound common sense as is quite common among the illiterate.

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From what has been said, the principal point in education is that *one's knowledge of the world begins at the right end*; and the attainment of which might be designated as the aim of all education. But, as has been pointed out, this depends principally on the observation of each thing preceding the idea one forms of it; further, that narrow ideas precede broader; so that the whole of one's instruction is given in the order that the ideas themselves during formation must have followed. But directly this order is not strictly adhered to, imperfect and subsequently wrong ideas spring up; and finally there arises a perverted view of the world in keeping with the nature of the individual – a view such as almost every one holds for a long time, and most people to the end of their lives. If a man analyses his own character, he will find that it was not until he reached a very ripe age, and in some cases quite unexpectedly, that he was able to rightly and clearly understand many matters of a quite simple nature.

Previously, there had been an obscure point in his knowledge of the world which had arisen through his omitting something in his early education, whether he had been either artificially educated by men or just naturally by his own experience. Therefore one should try to find out the strictly natural course of knowledge, so that by keeping methodically to it children may become acquainted with the affairs of the world, without getting false ideas into their heads, which frequently cannot be driven out again. In carrying this out, one must next take care that children do not use words with which they connect no clear meaning. Even children have, as a rule, that unhappy tendency of being satisfied with words instead of wishing to understand things, and of learning words by heart, so that they may make use of them when they are in a difficulty. This tendency clings to them afterwards, so that the knowledge of many learned men becomes mere verbosity.

However, the principal thing must always be to let one's observations precede one's ideas, and not the reverse as is usually and unfortunately the case; which may be likened to a child coming into the world with its feet foremost, or a rhyme begun before thinking of its reason. While the child's mind has made a very few observations one inculcates it with ideas and opinions, which are, strictly speaking, prejudices. His observations and experience are developed through this ready-made apparatus instead of his ideas being developed out of his own observations. In viewing the world one sees many things from many sides, consequently this is not such a short or quick way of learning as that which makes use of abstract ideas, and quickly comes to a decision about everything; therefore

preconceived ideas will not be rectified until late, or it may be they are never rectified. For, when a man's view contradicts his ideas, he will reject at the outset what it renders evident as one-sided, nay, he will deny it and shut his eyes to it, so that his preconceived ideas may remain unaffected. And so it happens that many men go through life full of oddities, caprices, fancies, and prejudices, until they finally become fixed ideas. He has never attempted to abstract fundamental ideas from his own observations and experience, because he has got everything ready-made from other people; and it is for this very reason that he and countless others are so insipid and shallow. Instead of such a system, the natural system of education should be employed in educating children. No idea should be impregnated but what has come through the medium of observations, or at any rate been verified by them. A child would have fewer ideas, but they would be well-grounded and correct. It would learn to measure things according to its own standard and not according to another's. It would then never acquire a thousand whims and prejudices which must be eradicated by the greater part of subsequent experience and education. Its mind would henceforth be accustomed to thoroughness and clearness; the child would rely on its own judgment, and be free from prejudices. And, in general, children should not get to know life, in any aspect whatever, from the copy before they have learnt it from the original. Instead, therefore, of hastening to place mere books in their hands, one should make them gradually acquainted with things and the circumstances of human life, and above everything one should take care to guide them to a clear grasp of reality, and to teach them to obtain their ideas directly from the real world, and to form them in keeping with it – but not to get them from elsewhere, as from books, fables, or what others have said – and then later to make use of such ready-made ideas in real life. The result will be that their heads are full of chimeras and that some will have a wrong comprehension of things, and others will fruitlessly endeavour to remodel the world according to those chimeras, and so get on to wrong paths both in theory and practice. For it is incredible how much harm is done by false notions which have been implanted early in life, only to develop later on into prejudices; the later education which we get from the world and real life must be employed in eradicating these early ideas. And this is why, as is related by Diogenes Laertius, Antisthenes gave the following answer: ἐρωτηθεις τι των μαθηματων αναγκαιοτατον, εφη, "το κακα απομαθειν." (*Interrogatus quatenam esset disciplina maxime necessaria, Mala, inquit, dediscere*

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