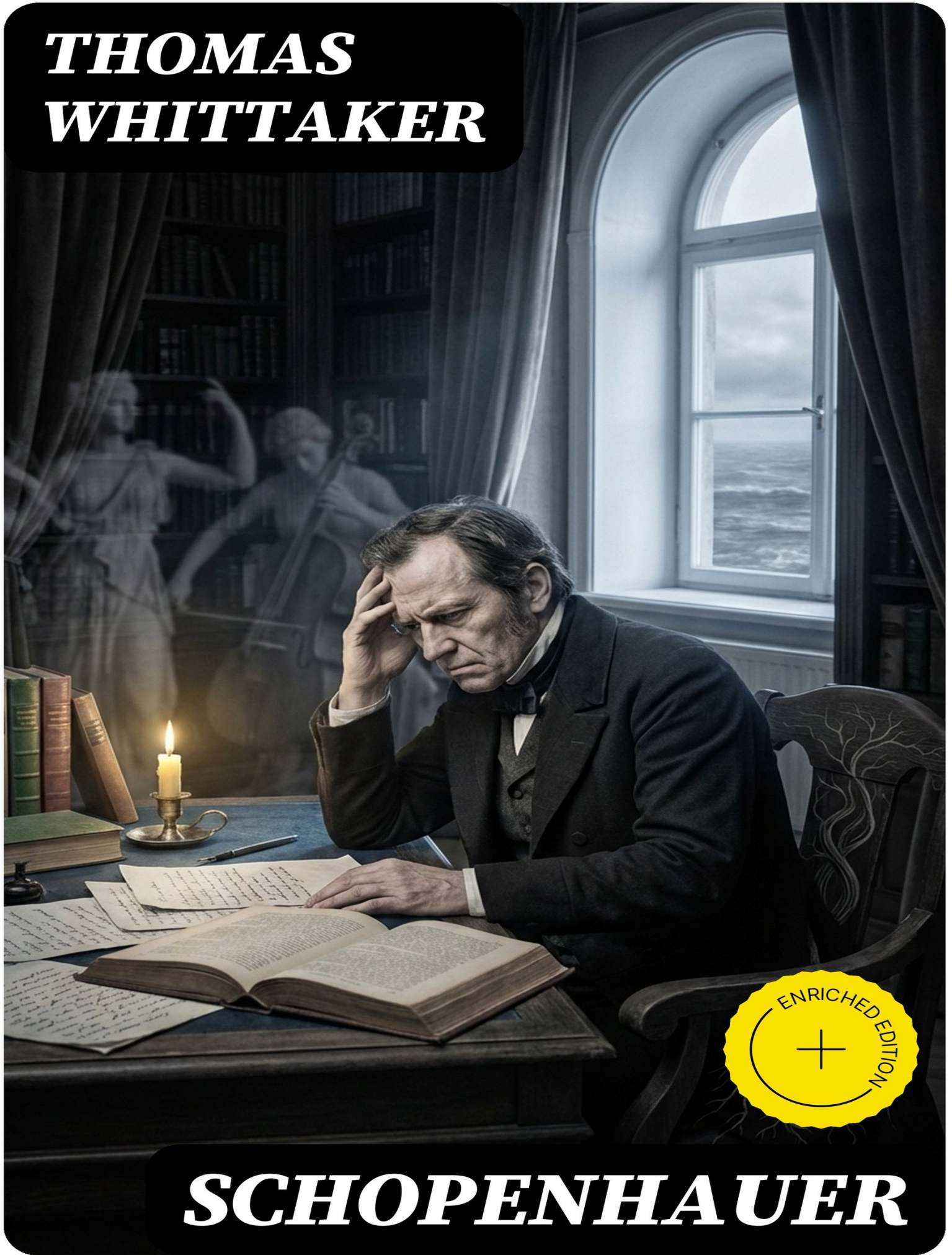
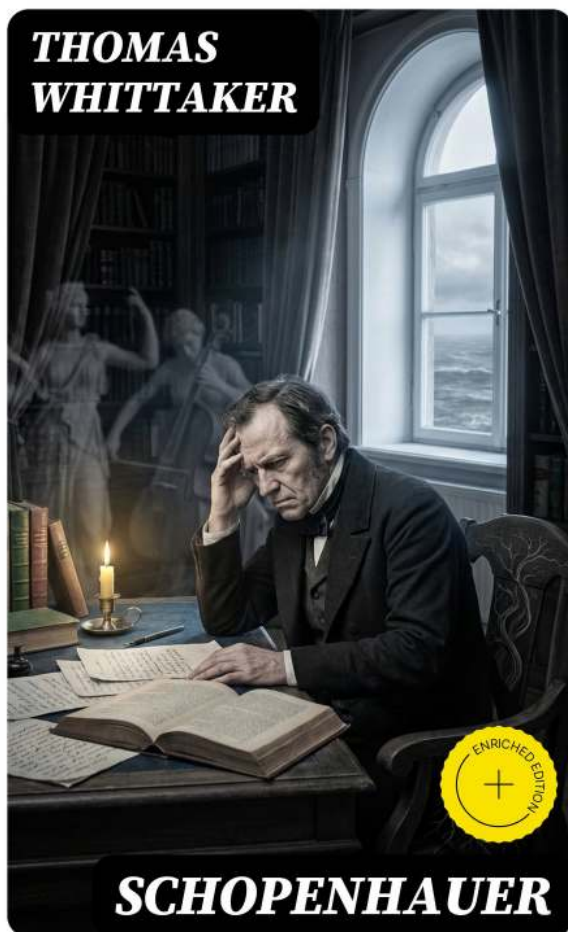


**THOMAS
WHITTAKER**



SCHOPENHAUER

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Thomas Whittaker

Schopenhauer

Enriched edition.

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Table of Contents

[Schopenhauer](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

SCHOPENHAUER

Main Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

LIFE AND WRITINGS

CHAPTER II

THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER III

METAPHYSICS OF THE WILL

CHAPTER IV

ÆSTHETICS

CHAPTER V

ETHICS

CHAPTER VI

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

SELECTED WORKS

CHAPTER I

[Table of Contents](#)

LIFE AND WRITINGS

[Table of Contents](#)

Arthur Schopenhauer may be distinctively described as the greatest philosophic writer of his century[1q]. So evident is this that he has sometimes been regarded as having more importance in literature than in philosophy; but this is an error. As a metaphysician he is second to no one since Kant. Others of his age have surpassed him in system and in comprehensiveness; but no one has had a firmer grasp of the essential and fundamental problems of philosophy. On the theory of knowledge, the nature of reality, and the meaning of the beautiful and the good, he has solutions to offer that are all results of a characteristic and original way of thinking.

In one respect, as critics have noted, his spirit is different from that of European philosophy in general. What preoccupies him in a special way is the question of evil in the world[2q]. Like the philosophies of the East, emerging as they do without break from religion, Schopenhauer's philosophy is in its outcome a doctrine of redemption from sin. The name of pessimism commonly applied to it is in some respects misleading, though it was his own term; but it is correct if understood as he explained it. As he was accustomed to insist, his final ethical doctrine coincides with that of all the religions that aim, for their adepts or their elect, at deliverance from 'this evil world.' But, as the 'world-

fleeing' religions have their mitigations and accommodations, so also has the philosophy of Schopenhauer. At various points indeed it seems as if a mere change of accent would turn it into optimism.

This preoccupation does not mean indifference to the theoretical problems of philosophy. No one has insisted more strongly that the end of philosophy is pure truth, and that only the few who care about pure truth have any concern with it. But for Schopenhauer the desire for speculative truth does not by itself suffice to explain the impulse of philosophical inquiries. On one side of his complex character, he had more resemblance to the men who turn from the world to religion, like St. Augustine, than to the normal type of European thinker, represented pre-eminently by Aristotle. He was a temperamental pessimist, feeling from the first the trouble of existence[3q]; and here he finds the deepest motive for the desire to become clear about it. He saw in the world, what he felt in himself, a vain effort after ever new objects of desire which give no permanent satisfaction; and this view, becoming predominant, determined, not indeed all the ideas of his philosophy, but its general complexion as a 'philosophy of redemption.'

With his pessimism, personal misfortunes had nothing to do[4q]. He was, and always recognised that he was, among the most fortunately placed of mankind. He does not hesitate to speak sometimes of his own happiness in complete freedom from the need to apply himself to any compulsory occupation. This freedom, as he has put gratefully on record, he owed to his father, Heinrich Floris