



The Uses of Pessimism: And the Danger of False Hope

Roger Scruton

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Ranging widely over human history and culture, from ancient Greece to the current global economic downturn, Scruton makes a counterintuitive yet persuasive case that optimists and idealists -- with their ignorance about the truths of human nature and human society, and their naive hopes about what can be changed -- have wrought havoc for centuries. Scruton's argument is nuanced, however, and his preference for pessimism is not a dark view of human nature; rather his is a 'hopeful pessimism' which urges that instead of utopian efforts to reform human society or human nature, we focus on the only reform that we can truly master -- the improvement of ourselves through the cultivation of our better instincts.

Written in Scruton's trademark style-- erudite, sweeping in scope across centuries and cultures, and unafraid to offend-- this book is sure to intrigue and provoke readers concerned with the state of Western culture, the nature of human beings, and the question of whether social progress is truly possible.

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