

# **The Story of Philosophy Study Guide**

## **The Story of Philosophy by Will Durant**

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# Plot Summary

Will Durant is the author of a 704 page book titled *The Story of Philosophy*. This work describes the lives and opinions of the greater philosophers. The period of time covered begins in the early centuries before Christ (B.C.) with the famous Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato. Aristotle and beginning Greek science are presented as these early centuries close. The following fifteen hundred years are summarized with moderate historical detail. Durant provides little historical information about Thomas Aquinas, Scholasticism and other philosophical schools of slight interest to him. He states this period of European domination by Roman Catholicism is led by medieval theologians who turn the thought of Aristotle into the foundation for medieval theology.

Durant skips over the dark period of thought from Aristotle to the Renaissance. Francis Bacon summarily rejects these centuries of philosophical misuse by opposing the cult of Aristotle. He resolves to turn philosophy from scholastic arguments into the illumination and increase of human good. Bacon begins his project for the great reconstruction of philosophy in the late sixteenth century. Spinoza brings a fresh perspective on Aristotle, the early Greeks and the dark period of thought. The effects of illumination Bacon seeks become unstoppable with Voltaire, Rousseau and the French Enlightenment and Revolution of the eighteenth century. Voltaire's romances, trips to the Bastille and exile to avoid recapture add humor to sections about his part in the French Revolution.

Immanuel Kant introduces the nineteenth century to dominant German idealism. His work over sixty years of seclusion bursts onto the world of philosophy like Voltaire's record-breaking first play. Hegel's dominance builds on Kant's despite his desire for "a place to live with simple food, many books and good beer." Schopenhauer tests his fame by scheduling his lecture to conflict with Hegel's. Schopenhauer confirms his reason for pessimism by lecturing to empty seats while Hegel's lecture hall is full. The author says Schopenhauer almost becomes an optimist by playing flute after he eats dinner alone.

The personalities and experiences of these philosophers and others, including Spencer and Nietzsche, end Durant's story of nineteenth century philosophers. Three philosophers each are presented in contemporary European and American philosophers. Durant writes the *Story of Philosophy* to provide a personal dimension to the study of philosophy. The author's goal for the book is to humanize the knowledge of speculative thought via selected dominant philosophers. He writes as an objective historian of personal facts, stories and philosophies of these philosophers. Durant's writing is full of stories about them that enliven the book. Despite the length of this book Durant uses a format that helps to maintain a sense of order and understanding in the information he presents to cover twenty-five centuries. The book's subsection and subheading titles are useful guideposts to the content in each chapter. A glossary and index are available to further assist in the understanding of unfamiliar terms.



# Plato

## Plato Summary and Analysis

Plato is born in Greece in the second millennium before the birth of Christ. Greece is located in the Mediterranean Sea where civilization and culture begin. The irregular coastal features of Greece's island geography create isolated regions. Communication with other regions on the island is difficult and dangerous. As a result many city-states develop isolated economies, cultures, religions and governments. The two city-states of Sparta and Athens unite in 470 B.C. to fight off Persian attempts to conquer Greece. The Athens port and navy grow into a busy trading center but Sparta lapses into an isolated agricultural area. Trading exposes merchants to the ideas of others. Some merchants doubt the local ideas and become the first sceptics. They trade with other merchants in coastal areas. Travel over seas makes them depend on stars to guide their navigation. The wealthier merchants look for answers to universal questions in the stars. Local belief in supernatural powers, magic and ritual is gradually replaced by science. The first Greek philosophers are astronomers. Other early philosophers like Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius study atoms and space and are called materialists. Others who look to their own thought and nature are called sophists. These clever men discuss many problems and solutions in philosophy. Some sophists travel to confront the beliefs of others with reasoning. They split in two politically. One group claims nature is good, civilization is bad and law is developed by the strong to rule the weak. The second group argues that nature is neither good nor bad, all men are unequal, power is supreme and the weak invent morality to control the strong. This group supports aristocracy and opposes the democracy of the first group. Athens' democracy of 400,000 includes 250,000 slaves. Critias leads the rich man's oligarchic party revolt on Athens' democracy because it is inefficient in war. He is killed in battle. Plato is his nephew and studies under Socrates.

Socrates teaches a mixed group of young learned men—their work becomes the root of European philosophy. They include rich and poor, socialists and anarchists who walk with Socrates challenging their words. He claims philosophy begins with doubting cherished beliefs, dogmas and axioms. He considers the study of man a subject worthy of philosophy. He develops his Socratic Method to test the assumptions of his pupils. He believes in one God but recognizes moral codes cannot be supported by uncertain theology. Intelligence is needed to manage a state run by wise men with the finest minds. Socrates is considered an aristocrat and intellectual leader of Critias' rich mans revolt against democracy. When democracy wins, Socrates is condemned to drink poisonous hemlock. He is philosophy's first martyr for claiming a right and need for free thought. Socrates is called wisest, most just and best of all men.

Plato's meeting with Socrates changes his life. Plato lives a comfortable athletic youth and becomes a successful soldier unlike most philosophers. He uses the Socratic Method like a sport. Plato is twenty-eight when Socrates is condemned to death. Plato becomes committed to the destruction of democracy and supports rule of state by the



wisest and best. Plato also is suspected by democratic leaders. He leaves Athens in 399 B.C. to travel twelve years visiting the Nile, Italy, Sicily, Judea and other lands. Plato returns to Athens at the age of forty in 387 B.C. where he begins to write. His style combines philosophy and poetry, science and art, making it difficult to determine whether his dialogue is literal or figurative. In addition to the Dialogues he writes *The Republic*.

*The Republic's* ethical problem is discussed at the wealthy aristocrat Cephalus' house. Plato's two brothers, the Sophist Thrasymachus and Socrates are all at his house. Socrates asks Cephalus what is the greatest blessing he receives from wealth. Cephalus offers various definitions challenged by Socrates until they discuss the meaning of justice. They agree a basic issue depends on a theory of moral conduct—whether justice seeks righteousness or power. Plato asks if it is better to be good or to be strong as he leads them to answer Utopia. The political problem continues because man is not content with a simple life. Greed and luxury drive man to be acquisitive, ambitious, competitive and jealous. Every society and government ruins itself by enabling excess in principle. Aristocracy becomes too limited and democracy becomes too unlimited. The problem of political philosophy is twofold. Incompetence and knavery must be barred from government. Only the best are selected and prepared to rule for a common good. A psychological problem is caused by human nature. Human behavior originates in desire, emotion and knowledge. Plato sorts desire into appetite, impulse and instinct. Emotion has spirit, ambition and courage. Knowledge takes in thought, intellect and reason. The source of each behavior is located in the human body. Desire is in the loins, emotion comes from the heart and knowledge is in the head. The eye of desire pilots the soul. All men have these powers in differing degrees. Each does best with his greatest power. Plato says statesmanship is a science and art one must live and prepare for. A philosopher-king is the only one fit to rule.

Plato's psychological solution provides a clean slate for each child and equal educational opportunity. Ten year old children must be taken from their parents to avoid the parents' habits. The education for ten years is physical exercise in gymnasium and playground. A healthy body is required for Utopia. Early education should not force but only amuse. Religion may help sanction moral needs of community. The hope and faith of eternal life can provide courage to confront the fact of earthly death. By thirty years old future rulers should be taught metaphysics to think clearly and politics to rule wisely. The elite should be taught the doctrine of Ideas for clear thinking. Generalities, regularities and ideals can develop meaning by classifying and generalizing a mass of sensations in the world. Plato claims ability to classify and coordinate sense experience with law and purpose makes an imbecile's mind different from Caesar's. After a successful finish, elites join business. Only survivors—scarred, successful, self-reliant and fifty—may be ready to lead the state.

Plato's political solution to democracy of perfect equality of opportunity does not admit voting. Rulers are made in his democratic aristocracy. Philosopher-kings are schooled in cultural wisdom and business. Elites are not thieves since they own only necessities and own no private property. They live a pure communist life with fixed income, common meals and lifestyle. They have no needs so it is unprofitable and dangerous to seek



more. Each elite is a brother or sister of common guardian parents. Education and labor is not deprived by gender. Eugenic supervision ensures good breeding. War may be avoided by states that control overpopulation. A small class of guardians rules with a large class of soldiers to protect them from the commercial, industrial and agricultural population. Excess wealth or poverty is controlled by guardians of a population still driven by acquisition and competition. The just state lets each class and social unit do work which suits its nature. No one interferes with others to produce an efficient harmonious whole.

Justice along with beauty and truth are the only three things worthwhile in Plato's ethical solution. Justice is defined as having and doing what is one's own. When Thrasymachus and Callicles challenge him, Plato adds a dimension of effective harmony of the whole. The welfare of the group becomes the unifying element in the description of justice. The goal of organization enables each member to do what he or she does best. A critique of Plato's Utopia is its feasibility and realism. Durant claims the politics of Catholicism in the Middle Ages may stem from Plato's Republic. The clergy are the guardians described by Plato with their celibacy and curriculum. The result is for a thousand years the people of Europe contribute to their upkeep without use of force. The Jesuits, a Catholic religious order, similarly rule Paraguay for a time as semi-Platonic guardians. Specifically, Plato's plan is deemed practicable by the author despite other criticisms. One unfair criticism is Plato's elimination of family, however, Plato never intended the elites to include everyone. An economic objection is that the guardians have power but no responsibility since they cannot own property. Consequently the non-ruling class can merely withhold goods and services from the guardians who have no recourse. As a tool, however, the Church is able to control an agricultural class in Europe by claims to supernatural dominion. In 387 B.C. the ruler of Syracuse in Sicily invites Plato to convert his kingdom into Utopia. When the king learns he has to become a philosopher or stop being king however, he withdraws the offer. Plato is a friend to his pupils and is invited to one of their weddings. He takes a nap and is found in the morning not sleeping but dead at the age of eighty.

The unique geographical coastline of Greece is a major contributor to the development of Greek philosophers. Although the island is relatively small, the populations of city-states are isolated from each other. Consequently, thinkers in each of the city-states are able to develop their thought separate from the interference of their neighbors. Each city-state functions independently with its own government, economy and culture. Although one or another city-state, like Athens and Sparta, may join efforts for a specific purpose, they return to their isolation when the goal is reached. Since Greece is an island, travel by sea is more convenient for city-state merchants on the coasts. The stars safely guide their travel and they believe the stars can guide their lives as well.

Isolation of the city-states creates a philosophical environment where thinkers deal with the same set of ideas in different ways. Plato is an idealist who challenges the greed and luxury of his rich friend Cephalus. The democracy of Athens condemns Socrates and Plato develops a Utopia where the elite aristocracy rules over the citizens for their own good. Plato's thought stimulates political struggles that other philosophers contend with for centuries. The search for an ideal world is replayed by French, English and



German philosophers. Variations on the theme play out in the Middle Ages with Catholic clerics as Plato's guardians of the faithful in Europe and the Communist Party rule in Twentieth Century Russia. Plato is invited to organize Utopia in Syracuse until the King learns he must leave his throne in order to achieve Plato's goal. Socrates, the first martyr of philosophy, lives on as Plato uses his Socratic Method to challenge others.



# Aristotle and Greek Science

## Aristotle and Greek Science Summary and Analysis

Aristotle is born in Stagira, a city in Macedonia. Stagira is two hundred miles north of Athens, Greece. His birth in 384 B.C. into a medical family orients him to become the founder of science. Many stories of his travels are told but all versions place him in Athens where he studies philosophy under Plato. Fifty years of age separate Plato and Aristotle. Their comparable mental abilities cause conflicts that get worse over time. Aristotle founds a school of oratory in Athens that Hermias attends. When Hermias is made autocrat of the city-state Atarneus, he invites Aristotle to his court. Philip, King of Macedon, calls Aristotle to teach Alexander who later becomes Alexander the Great.

Aristotle founds his school the Lyceum in Athens. The students and master walk along the athletic field as they learn. Aristotle's Lyceum differs from Plato's Academy. Rather than teaching mathematics and speculative and political philosophy, Aristotle's Lyceum teaches biology and natural sciences. He grows a zoological garden with the specimens Alexander has his subjects collect for him. Alexander also helps finance his Lyceum. Aristotle's writings are estimated to include four hundred to a thousand volumes. They are classified in Logical, Scientific, Esthetic and Philosophical works. The large amount of his work makes it difficult to avoid errors. His writings contain more errors than any other philosopher. His work is scientific and technical but not entertaining. Whether he writes directly or his students write for him, Aristotle is clearly the spiritual author.

Aristotle's foundation of logic is his first great achievement. Logic is the art and method of correct thinking. Every other method of science, discipline, art and music uses logic in its development and name. The practice of logic is an art that gives thought unconscious immediate accuracy. Socrates' insistence on definitions is an earlier step to logic. Every object definition uses object class as a first part and its distinction as a second part. Aristotle claims a universal is a common noun that is the subjective notion of an object that exists externally. Plato claims a universal has objective reality that is their objective existence. The differences between Plato and Aristotle grow clearer when Plato focuses on theories and ideas to determine particulars. Aristotle however refocuses on concrete particulars. Plato's Republic is an example of destroying individuals for an idealized state. Aristotle's formation of the syllogism is an example of integrating the particular with the universal.

Science begins with the Greeks before Aristotle and philosophy precedes Socrates. However both science and philosophy advance greatly with Socrates and Aristotle. Natural events are believed to originate with supernatural agency. Before Aristotle science is an obscure analysis of matter, motion, space, time and other concepts that are metaphysical but not scientific. His astronomy puts earth as center of the solar system but his meteorology makes brilliant observations. His formation of biology is stimulated by walks in his zoological garden. Aristotle sees a variety of response and





specialized function among species but does not form a theory of evolution. He rejects survival of the fittest. He makes more errors and advances in biology than anyone else.

Metaphysics and God's nature are based in Aristotle's biology. All things have an inner urge to grow more than they are. Everything is matter and form. Man is form that child grows into. Ultimately a concept of matter without form exists. Nature overcomes raw matter with form that constantly grows to reach victory in life. Matter is identifiable even if abstract. Motion needs a source. There is a prime mover Aristotle calls God. God is the drive and purpose of things that move others. Aristotle names God a self-conscious spirit without desire, will, needs or purpose. God's sole employment is self-contemplation.

Aristotle is a determinist who does not accept man's will to make any difference by choice. On the other hand he also argues that one can choose the environment that molds him. A contrary position is that selection results from determinism. Praise or blame indicates moral responsibility and free will. A second contrary position is that praise and blame are factors determining subsequent action may also be true. He defines soul as the entire vital principle of any being. Soul in plants is nutritive, reproductive power and in animals also sensitive, locomotive power. However in man soul is also a power of reason and thought that the body cannot exist without. Aristotle's soul is not material, as Democritus claims, and does not die.

The way to find happiness and fulfillment is the question over other questions. Aristotle sees the goal of life as not good for its own sake but happiness. The unique excellence of man is a power of thought that lets man surpass and rule all other forms of life. Since this gives man supremacy it ought to also give him happiness and fulfillment. The primary condition of happiness is a life of reason the fully developed man can achieve. Aristotle organizes qualities of character in groups of three. The middle quality is a reasonable choice between extremes. For example modesty lies between humility and pride. Unlike mathematics a mean is not an average that changes. Youth generally picks an extreme of excess and exaggeration. Each extreme is seen as opposite by the middle. For example, bravery lies between rash and cowardice but the coward sees the brave man as rash. A doctrine of means is in most systems of Greek philosophy. A golden mean, according to Aristotle, does not provide the entire secret of happiness. There are some worldly goods needed to avoid poverty, which can cause grasping stinginess. An external aid to happiness is friendship since happiness increases when shared. Regardless of goods and friends, happiness is within the individual. Happiness is a pleasure of the mind from pursuit of truth. Aristotle offers the profile of an ideal man who is a metaphysician and Superman.

Aristotle is an aristocratic conservative from his experiences of tutoring an emperor and marrying a princess and also from experiencing Athenian democracy. He wants order, security and peace that oppose a too frequent and easy change of laws. He disagrees with Plato on politics and government. Aristotle values individuality, privacy and liberty over Plato's social efficiency and power. A prospect of gain is needed for work and industry. His Politics accepts men as they are from nature and generally closer to the beast than to gods. According to Aristotle woman is an unfinished man, weak of will and



incapable of independence. He believes marriage and procreation should not be left to fickle youth but determined by the state. Centralized political power in one best man is better than monarchy which is generally the worst form. Aristocracy has no stable economic base, making government subject to the highest bid of the newly rich. Democracy may result from revolt against a plutocracy. Democracy is inferior to aristocracy because it is based on the assumption of equality among men. Aristotle recommends a combination of aristocracy and democracy as developed in constitutional government. An economic majority such as a middle class is best as golden mean between extremes.

Criticism of Aristotle is based on lack of enthusiasm about his philosophy. There is no reforming zeal like Plato expresses. Aristotle is skeptically calm. He insists on the use of logic and the syllogism for reasoning. Actually the reasoning process often starts with a conclusion and works back to the supporting premises. Aristotle specializes in classified observations but demonstrates no fruitful experiments and hypotheses. His work volume is overwhelming but not brilliant. His Ethics is like a logical handbook of propriety. The Aristotelian ideal of moderation is colorless and lacking in expression. He misinterprets many of Plato's fundamental positions in his own politics. Aristotle is a transplanted Athenian who matures and develops elsewhere. Aristotle did produce the most influential system of thought by a single mind. Aristotle's works are for European philosophy what the Bible is for Christianity. No other mind rules for so long the thought of man. When Alexander dies in 323 B.C. the Athenians are joyful and overthrow the Macedonian party. Aristotle leaves the city to avoid the fate of Socrates. After departing Athens, Aristotle becomes ill and the story is told that he commits suicide and dies lonely in 322 B.C. Within one year Greece loses Alexander, its greatest ruler, Demosthenes its greatest orator and Aristotle its greatest philosopher. For the next thousand years of the Roman rule of power, darkness lies over the land until the resurrection of philosophy.

Aristotle studies initially under Plato just as Plato studies under Socrates. Aristotle is from Macedon, however, not Greece. Unlike Plato, who at twenty-eight sees his admired master become a martyr of the government, Aristotle competes with his elder master Plato who is fifty years older. They both form schools of philosophy in Athens. Aristotle's Lyceum teaches sciences and Plato's Academy teaches speculative and political philosophy. This early stage of learning is not specialized enough to avoid conflict. For example, logic or the art and method of correct thinking begin with Socrates and Plato although Aristotle's first great achievement is considered the foundation of logic. Plato memorializes his dead master by naming Socrates a character in his writing. Aristotle challenges his master by attacking Plato's idea of the universal. Aristotle bases metaphysics and God's nature in his own ideas of biology.



# Francis Bacon

## Francis Bacon Summary and Analysis

The Macedonians Aristotle and Alexander dominate Greek philosophy and government. Athenian independence of government and thought is permanently destroyed by them. Alexander's conquests in Asia Minor enable the development of Greek commerce and trading posts. His early success with spreading Greek culture into Asia Minor does not continue further into the Orient. Asia is too large and traditional to take on new Greek traditions. Alexander finds the Orient spellbinding. He marries several ladies including the daughter of Darius. He brings back to Europe the notion of the divine right of kings from the Orient. His claim to be a god makes his Greek subjects laugh. Alexander opens the East to Greek culture and tradition but the Orient opens Greece to cults and superstitious faiths. Oriental apathy and resignation is accepted by a decadent and despondent Greece.

The Stoic's apathetic acceptance of defeat and the Epicurean's pleasure-seeking to forget defeat are both Oriental theories. Both theories form in opposition to Grecian ethical theories. Previous to this time similar ideas are unpopular in Greece. Stoics claim indifference to inevitable defeat is reasonable because impossible victory should be scorned. Epicurus claims indifference is impossible but pleasure is the only legitimate goal. Ironically, Zeno's Stoic renunciation brings a form of pleasure to Epicureanism. The similarity of Stoic apathy to Epicurean pleasure is tranquility and repose of mind. The Romans' arrival in 46 B.C. makes the rival schools split philosophically. Zeno's stoicism is like Rome's thinking. The Roman Lucretius claims in the spirit of Epicurus that the only hell is earth and gods live in gardens of Epicurus. Soul and mind grow with the body and die at death. Only atoms, space and the law of evolution and dissolution exist. Durant claims the trends and fragments of Greek and Roman stoicism become Christian ethics of self-denial, political ideal of communistic brotherhood and final conflagration. The Roman writer Epictetus moves the Greco-Roman soul from paganism to a new faith. Lucretius sees decaying agriculture as Rome's riches fail in poverty, disintegration, decadence and apathy. Roads fall into disrepair, trade falters, pagan culture defers to Oriental cults and the Roman Empire turns into the Roman Papacy. By the thirteenth century the Church owns a third of Europe. For a thousand years the Church unites a European continent by common faith and supernatural sanctions. Scholastic philosophy uses faith and reason to force acceptance of untried assumptions and conclusions. Scholasticism twists Aristotle's thought into medieval theology. New thinking begins with Roger Bacon (1294) and goes forward with da Vinci (1519), Copernicus (1543) and Galileo (1642).

Francis Bacon's political career begins at birth in 1561 in the traditions of Elizabethan England. His relatives are well-placed English aristocrats. The Atlantic nations of Spain, France, Holland and England are commercial and financial powers over Italy and the Eastern trade. Attending Trinity College at sixteen, Bacon resolves to turn philosophy from scholastic arguments to illumination and increase of human good. He opposes the



cult of Aristotle. Bacon accepts appointment as the English ambassador in France. The aristocratic young man loses his father and his inheritance in 1579. He returns to London to practice law. He is elected to Parliament in 1583. His popularity gets him re-elected by friends and constituents. Bacon takes an active role in prosecution of a loyal supporter that lessens his popularity and adds political enemies. At forty-five he marries and in 1606 is made Solicitor-General. At fifty-seven in 1618 he becomes Lord Chancellor.

Bacon's Essays compare his career to Plato's philosopher-king. Bacon pursues the goal to be a philosopher and statesman like Seneca. Despite loving books and meditation, he is conflicted between politics and philosophy. In the Essays he accepts an Epicurean ethic. He dismisses the Stoic repression of desire as injurious to health. His moral philosophy is Machiavellian in observation of what men do rather than Christian, observing what they should do. Bacon is often accused of atheism because his philosophy is secular and rationalistic despite claims to follow the King's religion. Bacon comments that a moderate study of philosophy leads to atheism but deeper study in philosophy leads back to Providence and Deity. Bacon is a conservative who wants to rule. He believes in strong central power and monarchy as the best form of government. He is a militarist who considers industry and peace to distract from the warrior in man. He holds Aristotle's idea that revolution is avoided by taking away issues that cause poverty and discontent. Every leader should try to divide enemies and unite friends. He claims fair distribution of wealth avoids revolt.

Bacon begins a reconstruction project without compare in history of thought. Aristotle's work attempts this undertaking but Bacon's is more practical than theoretical. He speaks to specific concrete goods rather than speculation. Bacon's expressed goal lays the foundation for utility and power. The advancement of learning is based on the laws of nature or science that leads to utopia. His takes an overall view of human research to shed light on areas he thinks need improvement. Bacon proposes the medical profession be allowed to ease and quicken death but also study prolonging life. He recommends the word chance be eliminated from scientific vocabulary since it is the name of something that does not exist. He refuses to discuss free will since will is not distinct from intellect.

Bacon invents a new science of social psychology with a few words of recommendation. He proposes a science of success in life and suggests Socrates' know thyself is a way to know others. Bacon claims friends are a means to power, which may explain his fall from power. He dreams the socialization of science can conquer nature and enlarge the power of man. He believes with the aid of King James I he can finish the Great Reconstruction in a few years, but without help it will take generations. A critic comments that Bacon's greatest performance is the first book of the work. He enlivens logic and makes the inductive process an adventure and conquest. Bacon claims Greek philosophers make mistakes because they spend more time in theory than observation. He recommends ignoring medieval theories to start over with a clean slate and fresh mind.



Bacon calls for the elimination of several errors he calls idols. They include idols of tribe such as fallacies of humanity in general, idols of the cave peculiar to the individual, idols of the marketplace from commerce and association of men with one another and finally idols of theater that migrate from dogma and wrong laws of philosophers. Bacon's theory of form is like Plato's theory of ideas. Bacon's forms are laws and regulations of simple action that arrange and constitute any simple nature. Knowing forms or laws lets things be remade in the image of one's desire. Bacon describes this utopia in the New Atlantis that he adapts from Plato's old legend of Atlantis. New Atlantis governors control nature not rule man. Bacon's view is the utopia of philosophers where the wisest men guide others in peace and modest sufficiency.

Bacon is criticized that his formulation of induction is not new. Socrates, Aristotle and Roger Bacon use inductive reasoning. Bacon does not keep up to date with the science of his time. He rejects Copernicus and ignores other scientists—his interest is in discourse rather than research. He wants to be like Plato in his passion for unity but misses the mark because his task is huge. Hobbes, Locke and Bentham follow Bacon's philosophy in its materialism, empirical psychology and utility. Bacon claims rising into place is painful and through indignities suffered one acquires dignity. However, once status is reached it is easily lost and regressing is a downfall or an eclipse. He spends the last five years of his life at home in peace and obscurity but also in poverty. He writes his last great work during this period. He dies in 1626 at sixty-five years old. His will bequests his soul to God, his body to obscure burial and his name to the ages and foreign nations.

Although philosophical change begins in the late thirteenth century, Francis Bacon is the first to refute scholasticism in the sixteenth century. A thousand years of Aristotelian abuse ends with Bacon's resolve to abandon the logical arguments of scholasticism to pursue the illumination and increase of human good. Bacon returns to Platonic roots in his career as a model of the philosopher-king. The European continent is under the control of the only real test of Plato's guardians. Catholicism uses Aristotle's logic in the form of scholasticism to maintain control of the continent and population by its clergy. Bacon is a politician-idealist following Plato in the search for the utopia he calls New Atlantis.



# Spinoza

## Spinoza Summary and Analysis

Spinoza's background and history begins with the odyssey of the Jews. The Roman capture of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. drives the Jews out of their natural home. They scatter throughout Europe and other continents. The Jewish dispersion begins centuries earlier but when the Temple is destroyed it becomes a mass migration. One part of the migration follows the Danube and Rhine into Poland and Russia. The other part migrates to Spain and Portugal with the Moors in 711 A.D. Some of these Jews migrate after 1492 to Holland when the King of Spain begins confiscating their goods. The Espinoza family of Portuguese Jews is in that group. In 1640 Baruch Spinoza, destined to become one of the greatest modern philosophers, is a child of eight. The education of Spinoza begins at synagogue studying Jewish religion and history. Spinoza is unsatisfied with answers he gets in synagogue so he begins to study Latin with a Dutch scholar.

Spinoza reads Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the atomists, the Stoics and the Scholastics. He concludes that a goal of philosophy is the perception of unity in diversity, mind in matter and matter in mind. He seeks a synthesis of opposites and contradictions where they meet and merge. He believes the highest knowledge of universal unity is the intellectual equivalent of the love of God. A mind knows the external world only through sensations and perceptions the world impresses on it. Spinoza accepts Descartes' idea that there is homogeneous substance underlying all forms of matter. Another homogeneous substance underlies all forms of mind. These two substances challenge Spinoza's theory of unity. Spinoza is excommunicated from the synagogue in 1656 as punishment for asking questions about Jewish and Christian beliefs. Synagogue elders fear their Christian hosts might disapprove of Spinoza's seemingly heretical behavior in the community. As a result of his philosophic inquiries, Spinoza is isolated from the Jewish community. He moves to an attic room outside Amsterdam where he changes his name from the Jewish Baruch to the gentile name Benedict. His hosts are Mennonite Christians. He grinds optical lenses to support himself, a manual skill sufficient to provide him with his moderate income.

The Treatise on Religion and the State is the first of four books he writes. The key point Spinoza makes is that the Bible's language is metaphorical. Bible verses use exaggerated descriptive expressions to attract the imagination of popular minds. Scripture is written to move men to devotion rather than to reason and explain. This purpose justifies the use of many miracles and appearances of God. There are several events in which Scripture claims God changes the laws of nature to accommodate His chosen people. Spinoza argues that God and the processes of nature are one. The Bible's use of miracles and parables makes an impression on the minds of the masses. Allegorical interpretation of Bible verse is not contrary to reason according to Spinoza. However, literal interpretation of Scripture opens the Bible to errors, contradictions and impossibilities. Spinoza does not distinguish Old and New Testaments in his thought. He





claims the Jews survive because persecution by Christians catalyzes the unity and solidarity needed to continue racial existence. Without persecution they might mingle and marry with European people. A philosophic Jew and philosophic Christian, however, can agree enough to live in peace. Spinoza claims a first step would be a mutual understanding about Jesus Christ.

The Improvement of the Intellect is Spinoza's second book. He describes in it why he gives up everything for philosophy. Spinoza believes the greatest good is knowledge of the union the mind has with all of nature. Knowledge is power and freedom. Happiness lies in a search for knowledge and joy of understanding. Since the philosopher is still a man and citizen, Spinoza recommends rules of conduct to follow. Among the rules he includes speaking to others in an understandable way, enjoying only the pleasures needed to preserve health and seeking only enough money to maintain life and health. Criteria are developed to discern types of knowledge that avoid self-deception. Hearsay knowledge comes from another, for example, knowledge of one's birth. Empirical knowledge comes from evidence that an event or thing actually works. Immediate deduction or knowledge by reason comes from reasoned conclusion but may be refuted by direct experience. A final and highest knowledge form combines immediate deduction and direct perception, an is found most clearly in mathematics. Intuitive knowledge sees in eternal aspects and relations. Laws and eternal relations underlie it.

Spinoza's Ethics develops from geometric form a compelling desire to reduce chaos of the world to unity and order. He uses a perfectly symmetrical system of thought like architecture. His system requires study, not mere reading. Each part is intrinsically part of other parts yet the whole must be understood before its parts can be. Nature and God describe the system's three pivotal terms. Mode is any individual thing or event of some eternal and invariable reality lying behind and beneath. Spinoza calls it substance. He borrows the term from Scholastic philosophers who use it in the sense of being or essence. Spinoza means by substance what he calls eternal order in his earlier book. However Spinoza also identifies substance with nature and God. For Spinoza the terms substance and modes, eternal order and temporal order, active nature and passive nature, God and the world are coincident and synonymous dichotomies. Since the will of God and laws of nature are the same reality, all events are the mechanical operation of invariable law. Spinoza sees in God and mind a world of determinism but not design.

The human problem of evil that man tries to reconcile with the perceived goodness of God is not relevant to God. Terms like bad and good are simply human prejudices God does not recognize. The will of God is the sum of all causes and all laws. The intellect of God is the sum of all minds. Matter and mind claims that will and intellect are the same thing because if an idea remains long enough in consciousness it becomes action. There is no free will with Spinoza. Survival needs determine instinct which determines desire leading to thought and action. Men do not have free will since they do not know the cause of desires that lead to will. Spinoza describes three ethical systems. Buddha and Jesus stress feminine virtues, consider all men of equal value, return evil with good and support unlimited democracy. Machiavelli and Nietzsche stress masculine virtues, consider men unequal in value, support combat, conquest and hereditary aristocracy.



The third ethic of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle stress masculine and feminine virtues, consider that only informed and mature minds can determine when love or power should rule and support a mix of aristocracy and democracy. Spinoza's Ethics is distinctive because it integrates and reconciles all three ethical systems. Its key principles are happiness is the goal of conduct, humility implies absence of power, conscious virtue conceals or corrects vice and minds are conquered by the soul. His ethic is more Greek than Christian.

Spinoza's philosophy is his attempt to love a world that rejects him. He considers himself like Job and the Jews, suffering persecution and exile. His religious spirit leads his thinking to merge with nature. He limits immortality of memory to only while it is in the body. Immortality is not a reward for clear thinking but is clear thought from the past into the present and reaching out into the future. Every truth is permanent and immortal. Despite far-reaching thought and clarity, the Ethics provokes many hostile interpretations.

The Political Treatise is the last of Spinoza's works. It is full of thought but shortened by his early death. His political philosophy expresses the liberal democratic hope of his time in Holland. He distinguishes between a natural and moral order. Apart from society man is isolated. The might of natural order is right. After societies develop, rights transfer to states where again might is right. Man is not born a citizen but must be prepared for it. Conscience is acquired and differs among various states. The passion of men leads to the need for law since men are not led by reason. The state should have little control over the mind of its citizens since power to control corrupts. A democracy should have universal military service. A single tax should support its needs. Democracy tends to put mediocre men in power and men of value are disinclined to participate. Consequently, democracies transform over time into aristocracies and eventually into monarchies.

The influence of Spinoza permeates all philosophical thought written after him. He is hated by the generation following his death in 1677. The critic Lessing and Jacobi restore him to good repute by 1780. Schelling and Hegel develop their pantheisms by combining Spinoza with Kant's philosophy of knowing. Spinoza influences so many because his work is subject to vastly different interpretations. Each new reading adds additional layers of understanding. Two hundred years after his death, contributions are taken to build a statue of him in The Hague, unveiled in 1882.

Spinoza develops Descartes' idea of homogeneous substance underlying all matter as the foundation for his pantheism. His first book analyzes and interprets Biblical verses as metaphorical, explaining its use of miracles. He refutes any literal interpretation as unreasonable. Having dispensed with faith as the faithful dispensed with him, Spinoza claims the greatest good is knowledge which is the reason he gives up all for philosophy. He dies before finishing his last volume. Despite his early death, his thought, in combination with Kant, underlies the pantheism of Schelling and Hegel.





# Voltaire and the French Enlightenment

## Voltaire and the French Enlightenment Summary and Analysis

A common criticism of Voltaire is that he has all the powers of hell in him. He lives a fairly average life in 1742 Paris but is kind, free with his energy and money, and as diligent helping friends as destroying enemies with a pen. Voltaire produces ninety-nine volumes of extensive and sparkling writing. He is stingy with his time because he has so much yet to do. Work keeps him from suicide in eighty-three years of life. Voltaire's work starts France thinking with unstoppable momentum. He is born Francois Marie Arouet in 1694 Paris. His father is successful as a notary and his mother is an aristocrat. Francois' aunt sees youthful signs of greatness. She gives him money to buy books. His father tells him a profession in literature will make him useless to society, a burden to his family and cause him to die of hunger. At twenty-one he writes two poems criticizing France's temporary ruler the Regent. Francois Arouet is imprisoned in the Bastille where he uses a pen-name Voltaire in 1717. He writes his first epic tale in eleven months there. The Regent frees Voltaire as an innocent man and gives him a pension. Voltaire thanks him for his board but asks to find his own room in the future. His first play in 1718 sets Paris performance records and nets Voltaire 4000 francs. He buys up all the tickets in a government-run lottery, further annoying the government. A failing play makes him sensitive to public opinion. In 1726 he challenges an official to a duel but is sent to the Bastille. He escapes to England.

Initially Voltaire struggles with French and English language differences. Within a year he masters the literature and meets English men of letters. Voltaire is surprised at their freedom to write and state opinions. London has no Bastille with government rulers that can imprison him without cause. England has thirty religions and no priests. Quakers are even able to act like Christians. Bacon, Hobbes, Locke and other philosophers are either active or their ideas implemented. Isaac Newton is considered a great man because he masters the minds of others through truth not violence. Voltaire writes Letters on the English that criticizes France and lays the theoretical groundwork for Revolution.

Voltaire writes The Romances in Cirey, France after the Regent gives him permission to return in 1729. He is unaware of Voltaire's revolutionary writing in England. Voltaire lives five years in Paris, writing and enjoying his old lifestyle. Voltaire is unaware a publisher discovers Letters on the English and publishes and distributes it without the author's permission. France's Parliament condemns the book to public burning. Voltaire fears he may be sent back to the Bastille. He elopes to Cirey with the young wife of a French Marquis who is away with his regiment. She spends days with Voltaire in study and research. They entertain guests in the evening with Voltaire acting in his own plays. Voltaire writes short novels that give humorous expression to his ideas. Voltaire and his mistress at Cirey create a Paris of the mind. In 1736 Prince Frederick begins writing to



Voltaire. Frederick's first letter flatters him but he has not yet written any masterpieces. Voltaire is pleased to hear Frederick is a pacifist. Voltaire's mistress dies in childbirth in 1749. He is saddened but tries to forget his loss by accepting Frederick's invitation and travel expenses to join him in his court in Potsdam. Voltaire leaves Cirey for Berlin in 1750. He tries German but finds his French tongue choking on the German consonants. He avoids state dinners and German but does not avoid irritating his government host by unapproved publication of a poem. He leaves Potsdam for Frankfurt and in 1754 leaves for Geneva to live safely, away from the government autocrats in Paris and Berlin.

The Essay on Morals causes Voltaire's current exile. The Essay he publishes in Berlin is the most daring of his work. Voltaire discusses the morals and spirit of the nations from Charlemagne to Louis XIII. He begins the work while in Cirey with his mistress. She calls it a picture of crimes and misfortunes. Voltaire says it is like reading the history of highway robbers. He believes only philosophers should write history. Fables and the human mind blinded by centuries of errors, ceremonies, facts and monuments are piled up to prove lies. Voltaire reads everything available on a subject and writes hundreds of letters to the survivors of events to document his research. He writes a history of society, not just wars. He records how man passes from living as barbarians to civilized society. Voltaire writes the first philosophy of history to systematically trace causes that develop the European mind. His Essay is the basis of modern historical science. He is exiled for his truth-telling. The King of France decrees he never step on French soil again.

Voltaire's permanent home near France is just inside the Swiss border at Ferney where he writes *Candide*. At sixty-four he lives with Swiss security but French refuge nearby. He has no wife but a niece who lets this man of genius amuse himself in his garden planting fruit trees. Ferney becomes an intellectual world capital with visits from enlightened rulers, skeptical priests, liberal aristocrats and learned men and women. Voltaire complains he is becoming Europe's hotel-keeper. His faith and hope are eroded by the persecution and disillusionment he suffers over the years. A Lisbon earthquake in 1755 proves too much when French clergy call it God's punishment for their sins. Voltaire pens a dilemma that God can either prevent evil but will not or wants to prevent evil but cannot. Voltaire does not accept Spinoza's belief that tragedy is trivial to eternity. Rousseau replies that man is at fault in Lisbon because if they live in fields the deaths are not so many and if they live under stars the houses would not fall on them. Voltaire is angered and mocks Rousseau by writing *Candide* which pokes fun at the best of all possible worlds.

The Encyclopedia and the Philosophic Dictionary is written in France after *Candide* becomes popular. The Reformation does not affect France like it does Germany and England. The French cannot compromise infallibility of the Pope and infidelity to the Church. Other French philosophers hostile to the traditional religion include La Mettrie, Helvetius, Holbach and Diderot. They write in the later period of Voltaire, from 1750 to 1784. Diderot is considered the greatest of the group. He claims belief in God rises and falls with submission to autocracy. Man is never free until the last king is strangled with the guts of the last priest. Materialism is a weapon to use on the Church until a better



one is found. Rousseau sows seeds of revolt against reason that soon capture every fortress of philosophy. Doubt may be disagreeable but claim to certainty is ridiculous. In Voltaire's later years he changes from a courteous skeptic into a bitter anti-cleric. Toulouse is near Ferney in France where Catholic clergy exercise absolute sovereignty. They forbid Protestants to hold any responsible position. Toulouse clergy persecute Protestants and other citizens. Voltaire opposes abuse by clergy and tries to break the priest's power. They offer him a cardinal's hat, angering him. He circulates his Treatise on Toleration that ends with "crush the infamy." He deems Christianity divine since it is 1,700 years old, despite villains. He wants immortality but finds it difficult to accept.

In the later period of Voltaire's life, he is too caught up in a struggle with Church tyranny to care about political corruption. He is rich and conservative. Forms of government are insignificant but he prefers a republic. Equality for all men means equal right to liberty, possession of goods and protection of the law. Freedom requires subjection to the laws. Voltaire's followers favor peaceful revolution but the oppressed are unsatisfied without equality, even if it means being without liberty. Rousseau is a voice of the common man demanding leveling to equality. Voltaire and Rousseau represent the conflict between reason and action. Voltaire is committed to intellect and reason. Rousseau is committed to instinct and action. Rousseau states equality and justice reign when law is removed. Voltaire responds man is better off under civilization than the savagery of man's nature. Voltaire and liberals think intellect can educate and change man slowly and peacefully. Rousseau and radicals feel that instinct and action make liberty, equality and fraternity reign.

During Voltaire's last days he becomes the laughing philosopher. He believes tending his garden is the best thing to do on earth. He is eighty-three and longs for Paris before he dies. His doctors advise against the trip but he chooses to die in his own way. He is welcomed as a king by three hundred visitors. He is sick and dying. A priest comes to hear his confession. After confessing his sins the priest refuses absolution to Voltaire without his signed profession of full faith in the Catholic Church. He refuses but gives the priest a statement of his belief in God. Sick and weak he gets up off his death bed to visit the Academy and see his play *Irene* being performed. He returns home that evening, exhausted, and dies on May 30, 1778. The priests of Paris refuse him a Christian burial. His friends take his body out of town to a priest who buries him in holy ground. In 1791 Louis XVI recalls his remains and has them placed in the Pantheon. He is escorted through Paris in a procession of 100,000 men and women with 600,000 more watching from the streets.

Voltaire writes philosophically through a literary tradition in eighteenth century France. His writing is abundant and contributes to the nation's developing revolutionary thought. His father Arouet claims a profession of literature will make him poor. As if to refute his father's claim, Voltaire's first play breaks all Paris performance records and nets a healthy sum. However the play is performed after Voltaire is released from prison the first time. He is not a criminal though it is said he has all the power of hell in him. Voltaire writes critically of French rulers and bureaucracy. He offends another government official and is exiled to London where he can avoid another stay at the Bastille. While in England he learns English and discovers that Bacon, other

philosophers and social critics can speak and write freely there without fear of the Bastille. Like Socrates and other philosophers, Voltaire is a gadfly who challenges political authority and consequently stays in trouble. He writes a critique in London that is a basis for the French Revolution. His habitual conflicts with authority keep him migrating to different areas and countries to avoid jail.



# Immanuel Kant and German Idealism

## Immanuel Kant and German Idealism Summary and Analysis

Philosophical thought in the nineteenth century is dominated by Immanuel Kant. For almost sixty years he works in seclusion and quiet development of the critical philosophy that rules European speculation. In 1781 he rouses the world from dogmatism with his *Critique of Pure Reason*. The philosophy of Schopenhauer in 1848, evolution after 1859 and Nietzsche at the end of the century are secondary superficial advances on a Kantian model that forms the axioms of mature philosophy. Voltaire's beginning of theoretical reason without faith evolves into religious faith with no reason. His enlightened age of reason and Francis Bacon's thought encourage confidence in the ability of science and logic to solve problems, showing man can become perfect. This use of reason conflicts with the religious faith and hope that thousands of church steeples in Europe demonstrate. Religion and faith is too deeply rooted in society to let this reasoning go unchallenged.

Locke, Berkeley and Hume all contribute to the scrutiny of reason but are still hostile to religion. Philosophical self-examination develops, with instinct and feeling overcoming the primacy of intellect and reason. Anxious theologians reinforce the notion that faith and morals are inborn to every soul. Locke claims knowledge comes from experiences through the senses. If material things affect the senses then only matter can be known. Therefore matter must be the material of mind since sensations are necessary for thought. Bishop Berkeley counters by arguing Locke proves matter does not exist except as a form of mind. Berkeley refutes Locke's materialism by claiming matter is not knowable. If all knowledge comes from sensation that is perceived then a thing is a grouping of organized and interpreted sensations. Hume takes the analysis one step farther by claiming to know mind in the same way matter is known—by perception. Mind is just an abstract name for a collection of perceptions, memories and feelings. No observable substance or soul lies under the process of thought. Hume and Berkeley together destroy both mind and matter with their reasoning. A witty resolution to this argument is provided by the saying, "No matter, never mind." Bishop Berkeley's reasoned argument no longer supports religion.

Kant's reading of Hume rouses him to reconsider the results that religion and science both surrender to reason. A resolution is proposed to the dilemma that reason proves no mind and therefore no matter either. Although reasoning alone leads to no mind and no matter, instinct and feelings clearly oppose this conclusion. Rousseau argues against the enlightened materialism and atheism of France. He writes whenever philosophy grows in a country its moral health decays. Although a man can become smart with education it does not make him good. Reason is not as trustworthy as instinct and feeling. Kant's reading of Rousseau introduces him to another writer trying to find a way out of atheism by proclaiming priority of feeling over reason. Immanuel Kant decides to



integrate the arguments and ideas of Berkeley and Hume with Rousseau's feelings. His mission is to save religion from reason and science from scepticism.

Kant himself is born in Königsberg, Prussia in 1724. He tutors for a while in a nearby village but otherwise never leaves his birth town. His ancestral family arrives from Scotland a hundred years earlier. Kant spends his youthful days totally immersed in religion but does not attend church as an adult. Despite limited exposure to the world around him, he is exposed to the skeptical trends of the time. He is influenced by those whose theories he challenges. Kant is appointed professor of logic and metaphysics in 1770. Ironically he is a timid and modest professor, loved by his students, who creates a metaphysical tempest that startles the world. He writes about planets, earthquakes, fire, wind and many subjects other than metaphysics. Quietly he writes and rewrites his great work for fifteen years while remaining unknown to other metaphysicians. At fifty-seven years old in 1781, he finishes the work that shocks and upsets the philosophic world.

The Critique of Pure Reason is a critical analysis of knowledge that is independent of all sense experience. This knowledge does not come through sensation but is inherent to the nature and structure of the mind. His critical analysis challenges the arguments of Locke and Hume. Kant calls their conclusions false because they are based on false premises. Knowledge that is independent of sense-experience and whose truth is certain before experience is called a priori by Kant. The Critique examines the origin and evolution of concepts which is the mind's inherent structure. Experience is not the only means by which knowledge appears. Some truths are true without experience. For example two times two is a mathematical truth that is absolute, necessary and non-experiential. These truths originate in a mind's inherent structure and way it operates. The original sense of connoting sensation or feeling is the first of the stages studied. The agent of selection and direction that uses and controls sensations and thoughts is mind. Space and time are not things but are rather ways of perceiving sense in sensation. Space and time are a priori because without them sensations cannot become perceptions. Some elements in thought are not given to the mind by perception but rather given to perception by the mind. These tools of the mind raise the perceptual knowledge of objects into the conceptual knowledge of relationships, sequences and laws. They turn experience into science. The orders of knowledge follow sequentially, building each one upon the former. Sensation is unorganized stimulus that is organized by perception. Perception that is organized is conception or knowledge. Organized knowledge or conception becomes science and wisdom is organized life.

Kant argues that Locke's position, that there is nothing in the intellect that is not in the senses first, is mistaken. The world has order since thought in knowing the world orders it. Certainty of the highest generalizations of logic and science is transcendental dialectic. One is not able to know apart from the manner of knowing. Individuals know things differently and uniquely. Science is based on sensations, perceptions and conceptions and not on things in themselves. The idea of a thing is distinct from a thing itself. Transcendental dialectic reminds theology that substance, cause and necessity are finite categories, modes of arrangement and classification which mind applies to sense-experience. They are valid only for phenomena that are in experience. Kant tries





to save religion from reason but ironically argues that a free and immortal soul and a benevolent creator could never be proved by reason. Kant's Critique undermines arguments of theology and in the process kills God.

The Critique of Practical Reason is a critical analysis of the moral basis of religion. Since religion cannot be based on science and theology, another foundation must be developed beyond reason. The moral basis of religion must be absolute and derived only from the inner self by direct perception and intuition. Kant now sets out to prove that the moral sense is innate and does not come from experience. The moral imperative as basis of religion must be an absolute categorical imperative. Action is good because it is done in accord with one's inner sense of duty. It is an a priori requirement for behavior. Only will to follow moral law, regardless of consequences, is an unqualified good. Following this principle can enable creation of an ideal community of rational beings. Placing duty above all other values can enable man to abandon his beastly nature and begin to become gods. One's inner sense of duty survives because it is innate to one's heart. This moral sense is not proof but has priority over theoretical logic. Rousseau is correct that feeling in the heart is above logic of the head. The heart has reasons the head cannot understand.

Kant's bold denial of rational theology is based on reduction of religion to moral faith and hope. He claims external design is not conclusively a proof of God. Theologians should abandon the idea but ironically he asserts that scientists who have abandoned it should use it. His essay on religion written at the age of sixty-nine is the boldest of his books. Since religion must be based on a practical moral sense, the Bible is valued for morality and not as a judge of moral code. Churches are valuable if they assist moral development, not because of their creed or ceremonies. The kingdom of God should not be replaced by the priests' kingdom. Creed and ritual replace a good life and divide man into sects that do not join them together. Kant's protests are pertinent because the King orders him to cause no future offense. At the frail age of seventy, Kant agrees to be silent in 1794.

Kant's political heresies do not allow the Prussian government to pardon him so easily. The French revolution sets all European thrones in question. Kant's writings of 1784 and later, wherein he is critical of the Prussian government and encouraged by the French Revolution, get their attention. Kant notes the militarism of Europe's expansion into America, Africa and Asia. He considers it a result of an oligarchic constitution that the spoils of war go to a greedy few. A democracy would cause the spoils to be subdivided so the temptation could be resisted. Kant calls for the equality of opportunity to develop and rejects benefits of birth and class. His age diminishes his energy and ability to continue the political fight and, at the age of 79 and senile, he dies in 1804.

Kant tries to prove subjectivity of space because if space is objective and universal then God must exist in space and is therefore spatial and material. Kant shows the external world is known only as sensation and the mind is not inactive but a positive actor that selects and reconstructs experience as it arrives. Morals are not absolute but a code of conduct that develops for group survival and varies with the nature and circumstances of the group. Kant vigorously revives in his second Critique the religious ideas of God,



freedom and immortality his first Critique destroys. The lack of grounding in speculative theology frees up and further establishes popular theology as a faith based moral feeling. Philosophers promote his speculative writing to rouse German interest in metaphysics.

The extravagant writings of Fichte and Schelling do not exceed Hegel's ability to create a written monument to German stupidity. Hegel is born in 1770 in Stuttgart. He is a tireless student raised with patient and methodical habits of efficient civil servants like his father. Hegel graduates in 1793 with certified accomplishment in theology and philology but without ability in philosophy. He asks his friend Schelling to recommend a place to live with simple food, many books and good beer. Hegel becomes a teacher at the University in Jena in 1803. Napoleon's French soldiers invade Jena in 1806, but Hegel escapes with a manuscript of Phenomenology, his first important book. He is poor and borrows money from a benefactor to whom he paraphrases a Bible verse, to seek first food and clothing and the kingdom of heaven shall be added unto you. In 1812 he takes an administrative job in Nurnburg. By 1816 he writes his book Logic—its unintelligibility captivates Germany and wins Hegel the philosophy chair at Heidelberg. Logic and Phenomenology are the only books he writes. Their style is obscure and darkly abstract. Other works of Hegel are from his own or his students' lecture notes. The Logic is an analysis of the concepts or categories Kant uses in reasoning. A concept present throughout works of reasoning is Relation. An idea not expressed in relation to anything else is empty.

However, the expression of Hegel's claim that "Pure Being and Nothing are the same" is misunderstood to become at the same time a barrier and bait to studying his thought. The most universal relation is contrast. Similar to Aristotle's golden mean between two polar opposites, Hegel uses opposition of extremes to support "dialectical movement" through all his writing. Schelling and Fichte concur with Hegel and the terms thesis, antithesis and synthesis are used to describe evolution of thought and things also. All contradiction resolves in a reconciling unity that is the function of mind. The task of philosophy is to discover unity that is in diversity. The task of religion is to reach out to feel the Absolute where all opposites resolve into unity. The dialectical movement of history is a series of revolutions by men and nations as instrument of the Absolute. The process puts change in the dialectical process as the central principle of life. Hegel is more conservative in his later years than his radical thought suggests. The times in his sixties are weary with too much change. His idea of Absolute as determinant of history is replaced by subsequent mass movements and the economic forces of Marx. Hegel dies in 1831 from cholera.

For well over fifty years, Immanuel Kant works in seclusion and solitude developing a philosophy that eventually dominates the nineteenth century and rules European speculation. His model builds on Voltaire's theoretical reason without faith, evolving into his own religious faith without reason. Unlike Voltaire's birth in France and exile to England, Germany and Switzerland, Kant is born in Prussia where he stays in self-exile to work. Kant is the quiet professor who shocks and upsets the philosophic world in 1781. His work attacks the very foundation of knowledge independent of sense experience. The irony of his work is that his attempt to save religion from reason





undermines the arguments of theology and consequently kills God. The irony of Kant's quiet Prussian life relative to Voltaire's Parisian life, with touch of hell in him, is that the quiet professor also gets in trouble with the King. At the frail old age of seventy he is ordered to cause no future offense. He criticizes the government for its oligarchic constitution leading to warring for the greedy few. Democracy would level the spoils to be shared by all, like Rousseau's equality. Another German idealist, Hegel writes so as to confound, confuse and attract disciples at the same time. Hegel's dialectic movement, Aristotle's golden mean and the Socratic Method converge in ongoing revolutions throughout Europe that march towards unity in diversity as a central principle of life.



# Schopenhauer

## Schopenhauer Summary and Analysis

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Schopenhauer is the philosopher included in a group of pessimists, poets and composers considered the voices of the age. The Holy Alliance, Waterloo and Revolution of the Great Age are all over. The Bourbons are restored and Napoleon is exiled on St. Helena. Life starts over at the bottom again on the Continent. The European economy recovers slowly and painfully from the losses of war. Schopenhauer travels through France and Austria where he is affected by the chaos, poverty, unrest and misery of the towns he visits. The Revolution is dead and the life of hope and Utopias is gone out of the soul of Europe. The poor still have the consolation of religious hope but the upper classes lose it as well as their riches. Conditions in 1818 make it hard to believe there is an intelligent and benevolent God. The seeds of a whirlwind sown by Voltaire remain as the harvest for Schopenhauer to reap. Some believe this is vengeance of a just God on the Age of Reason and unbelief. Schopenhauer and others believe there is no divine order or heavenly hope. The chaos of Europe mirrors that of the universe.

Arthur Schopenhauer is born in 1788, in Dantzig, Poland. The family moves to Hamburg in 1793 when Poland is annexed. In his youth, Arthur is exposed to business and finance which teaches him a blunt manner, realistic mind and knowledge of the world and of men. His mother is a cold, competitive, heartless and unloving personality who seems to doom him to pessimism. His unsatisfying experience with love and the world during school and the university leave him gloomy, cynical, suspicious and obsessed with fear and evil fancies. In 1813 he considers joining in the war of liberation to oppose Napoleon. Schopenhauer reconsiders and goes to the country to write a doctoral dissertation in philosophy instead. After completing it, Arthur begins work on his masterpiece, *The World as Will and Idea*. He sends the completed manuscript with his statement of great praise for it to a publisher. The book gets little attention because Europe is too poor and exhausted to read about its own condition. The publisher informs him years later that most of the edition is sold as waste paper. Arthur refuses to accept this outcome. He considers his efforts to be like that of a musician playing to a deaf audience. Most of his later works are commentaries on it.

He is invited to present his philosophy at a university lecture in Berlin in 1822. He schedules his lectures during the same period Hegel teaches. He assumes the students consider both of them equally important in the eyes of posterity. Schopenhauer lectures to empty seats. Arthur subsequently takes out his revenge with bitter attacks on Hegel's work. Schopenhauer flees Berlin when cholera breaks out and lives to seventy-two years old in Frankfurt. Schopenhauer does not try to make a living by writing as optimists do. He receives an inherited interest in his father's firm providing him moderate comfort. Schopenhauer lives the last thirty years of his life in a two-room flat at a boarding house with his dog. The universities ignore him and his writings but he perseveres. Science's attack on theology and a socialist indictment of poverty provide



him the fame he believes he deserves. In the last two years of his life, he almost becomes optimistic when playing flute after dinner. On his seventieth birthday he is congratulated by people all over the world. Two years later, in 1860, he eats breakfast alone and is found dead by his landlady.

The style of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea* is clear, orderly and centered on his primary conception of the world as will thereby causing strife and misery. The book is rejected because he attacks his own publicity and support. Hegel leads the community of philosophy instructors and writers in 1818. Schopenhauer denies the significance of Hegel's philosophic position between Kant and himself. Schopenhauer starts his book with the claim that the world is his idea. His poorly expressed meaning accepts Kant's theory that an external world is known only through sensations and ideas. That offensive and seemingly arrogant opening begins two-hundred pages of second-hand idealism.

Consciousness is similar to the surface of the mind like the crust of the earth. Underlying conscious intellect is conscious or unconscious will. The will is a striving, persistent vital force that leads. Things are wanted not because of the reasons for them, but reasons are found because they are wanted or willed. Schopenhauer makes it clear that convincing a man is not a matter of reason but of appealing to self-interest. The will gives unity to the consciousness that holds together its ideas and consciousness. Character is in the will not the intellect. The intellect tires and needs sleep but the will never tires and works while one sleeps. Will is the essence of man and may also be the essence of all forms of life. Aristotle precedes Schopenhauer in claiming that the power of will drives plants, animals and man. The instinctual skill of animals shows the priority of will over intellect. The will is a maximum will to live in spite of its eternal enemy death. The will to reproduce ensures the conquest of death, even beyond a philosopher's reflection.

Schopenhauer claims the first law of sexual attraction is that a mate is determined by fitness to procreate. Love unions are often unhappy because the goal is not pleasure but perpetuation of the species. Love and marriage is a deception of nature that disillusion. Consequently, only a philosopher can be happy in marriage but philosophers do not marry. Passion depends on an illusion of value for the individual that disappears after value to the species is reached. Drawing on the determinism of Voltaire and Spinoza, Schopenhauer agrees a priori the individual believes his will is free. After experience, a posteriori, he discovers he is not free but subject to necessities that define his conduct.

Schopenhauer concludes that if the world is will, it is a world of suffering because willing indicates want. As long as one is subject to willing there is no lasting happiness. Life is evil since pain is a basic driver and pleasure is the absence of pain, as Aristotle described. If want and suffering is less, man requires diversion. If strife is removed, boredom follows that is just as painful. Greater success leads to more boredom. Life depends on not knowing it too well. One can be happy in youth because youth is ignorant and thinks willing and striving are joys not evidence of insatiable desire. As one grows older and experience leads to wisdom, death comes nearer. The final refuge of



life is suicide, but it is a vain and foolish act. Misery and strife continue as long as the will dominates man. Conquering life's ills is possible only by submitting will to knowledge and intelligence.

The desire for material goods is absurd. A man of means can fulfill every desire. Money alone can satisfy any desire whereas other things satisfy only one or a few desires. Man tries to become rich, not cultured. However, what makes him happy is what he is not what he has. Schopenhauer recommends seeking Life before books and original Text before commentary. Aristotle's truth that happiness needs self-sufficiency leads Schopenhauer to claim a path from endless willing is intelligent contemplation of life and achievements of great men of all times and lands. This contemplation sets one free from the miserable striving of the will. Genius describes the highest form of will-less knowledge. Lower forms of life are will without knowledge. Man is mostly will with little knowledge. Genius is mostly knowledge and little will.

There is natural opposition between genius and woman because woman wills to live and reproduce, subjugating intellect to the will. In general, intellectually poor and vulgar men are more sociable. A man of genius does not need company as do men who depend on what is outside them. The genius becomes isolated and sometimes out of his mind. Generally distinguished men in philosophy and politics appear melancholic. These are the true aristocracy of mankind. Even learned men are intended by nature to till the soil. Art describes the elevation of the mind to will-less contemplation of truth. Science is a universal comprised of many particulars but art is the particular than is comprised of a universal. Art requires genius because it reaches its goal by intuition, whereas science can reach its goal by laborious accumulation and cautious reasoning. Schopenhauer concurs with Spinoza's position that the mind participates in eternity when it sees things in their eternal aspect, art. Religion describes a process whereby Schopenhauer's theory of withdrawal of will and contemplation of the eternal and universal becomes a theory of religion. Ironically, Schopenhauer criticizes Christianity as a profound philosophy of pessimism comprised of the will's assertion by sinning and the will's denial in salvation. He considers paganism and Judaism optimistic because they use religion as bribery to the gods for earthly success. Buddhism is more profound than Christianity because its sole purpose as religion is destruction of the will.

The individual achieves peace of will-lessness in Nirvana and salvation but the race goes on. The final and radical conquest of the will lies in stopping the source of life, the will to reproduce. Schopenhauer claims the male is more beautiful in body than women. Similarly he claims a female intellect is also significantly lacking in objectivity. Women are venerated because of Christianity and German sentiment. The Romantic Movement exalts feeling, instinct and will above intellect. He claims women are not a necessary evil since life is safer and smoother without them. If man develops courage to defy will and recognize that the loveliness of life is a lie, he will see that the greatest boon of all is death.

Schopenhauer is a philosopher during one of the more unpleasant periods of European history. The optimism that accompanies revolution and war is transformed into the pessimism that accompanies the ravages of war and unmet goals. Whether the sense



of Schopenhauer's work comes from the times or his personality and life experience is a question. His father is a businessman and his mother is a cold, heartless, unloving and competitive personality. Apparently unloved at home and unsuccessful in romance, he considers soldiering but he settles on doctoring in philosophy. He goes off to the country where he writes his dissertation alone. When it is done he begins his life's work, a book he considers a masterpiece. Unfortunately his publisher discards most of his unsold books as waste paper years later. Schopenhauer meets this news of rejection with denial. When no students attend his lecture in Berlin, he attacks Hegel's work because his lecture hall is full. There is an irony in Schopenhauer's fame as a pessimist. His metaphor that his work is not appreciated because the audience is deaf is optimistic. Logically, he just needs to find a different audience since he does not question himself. Schopenhauer is an optimist but not very realistic. He accomplishes goals that he sets for himself. He sets up his lecture at the same time as the popular Hegel. No students attend a lecture to hear the unknown Schopenhauer. Hegel leads the popular philosophic community of the time. The attack of an unknown on Hegel's popular work does not make Schopenhauer's work sell better. There is a deafness associated with this philosopher. Schopenhauer is deaf to his audience and the world at large.



# Herbert Spencer

## Herbert Spencer Summary and Analysis

Kant's writing puts metaphysics into a dilemma. Historically metaphysics is an attempt to discover and explain the ultimate nature of reality. Kant determines ultimate reality to be a noumenon, or Thing-in-Itself, that can be conceived in thought but not experienced. Human intelligence cannot experience the phenomenon or appearance of reality. Before Kant, the Absolute is assumed to absorb all thought but after him metaphysics is abhorred. An historian of ideas can see a progression through three stages. Initially the subject or event is conceived theologically and explained as the will of a deity. The second level is a metaphysical stage explained in reference to a metaphysical abstraction. The final stage moves to positive scientific explanations from observation, hypothesis and experiment. Comte claims the metaphysical stage is not fully developed. Philosophy should attempt to coordinate all sciences with a goal of improving human life. Comte and Spencer both consider philosophy a generalization of all science, resulting in a positivist movement. The Industrial Revolution uses the application of some sciences and thereby stimulates use of additional sciences. In the 1850s Spencer comments on evolution long before Darwin's theory of natural selection becomes popular by the end of the decade. During the nineteenth century, biology forms the background of philosophic thought.

Spencer is born at Derby in 1820. His ancestral family has many dissenting thinkers. Spencer is an engineer by training and the profession appeals to his practical nature. He is a logical thinker who clearly distinguishes a priori from a posteriori considerations. He has the ability to organize, synthesize and coordinate information beyond his perceptions. Spencer grows in the spirit of his age. He thinks evolution may apply to all sciences like it does in biology. He resigns from a job as editor of the Economist and lives from hand to mouth despite an inheritance from his uncle. He sells advance subscriptions for a living until he begins to receive dividends and interest from securities given him by admirers.

Spencer's First Principles analyzes religious ideas. He concludes that every theory of the universe's origin has inconceivable points. He theorizes that all ultimate religious ideas eventually become logically inconceivable. All thinking is limited by relative knowledge. Truth requires the coordination of opposite opinions. Science must admit law can apply only to phenomena in relation. Theology is a rationalizing myth for belief that defies conception. Evolution describes metaphysics as a mirage. It is the art of methodical self-confusion. Spencer offers a formula of evolution that integrates matter with its accompanying dissipation of motion. The process increases the distinguishing form and function from the primeval homogenous nature. Similar to Kant's law of three stages, Spencer's synthetic formula begins with instability of the homogeneous. He then progresses into the multiplication of effects, the law of segregation and, finally, inescapable equilibration. Cycles of evolution and dissolution continue without end. Both



Spencer and Schopenhauer are convinced human effort is futile. Life is not God and heaven but equilibration and dissolution.

The Evolution of Life are second and third volumes of Spencer's work in 1872, and reveal the limitations of a philosopher addressing the specifics of a specialists' field. Spencer defines life as the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations. Specifically he claims excessive fertility causes sluggish mentality. Inversely, excessive expenditure of mental activity accompanies complete or partially reduced fertility. Society's birth-rates should approximate adaptation to group survival needs. Spencer concurs with Malthus' general principle that population tends to exceed the means of its subsistence. This pressure of population causes progress and survival of the fittest.

The Evolution of Mind is the weakest section of Spencer's work. He has many theories in this volume but little proof. He argues from an evolutionist viewpoint in psychology. Spencer attempts genetic explanations, tracing thought to simple nervous operations and the motions of matter. Although his efforts begin with a magnificent program, they fail. He claims rational action is an instinctive response that survives the struggle with other instinctive responses aroused by a situation. Will is an abstract term for the totality of active impulses. Choice is the natural next step to transform an idea into action.

The Evolution of Society is Spencer's favorite field where he can freely express his best with suggestive generalization and political philosophy. Unlike the life-long study required to master physics and chemistry, social studies and political affairs are quicker to learn and solutions understood. Spencer does not treat these studies lightly. He employs three secretaries to gather and classify the necessary data. He publishes eight volumes of his collections from 1876 to 1896 after seven years of study. Regardless of his preparation, Spencer quickly generalizes. Religion is central in the life of primitive civilization. The soul of men living humble and precarious lives relies more on future hope than reality. Similarly, warring societies rely on supernatural religion when their thought turns from death to life. A military state is centralized, monarchical, regimental, compulsory, and supports authoritarian religion. The history of most states is a record of robbery, treachery, murder and national suicide. Peace is necessary for prosperity to develop. International peace is essential for international capital and investment. Industry teaches mechanisms of the universe. As industry grows, government power lessens and productive groups increase contractual relationships. As society industrializes, the belief that individuals exist for the State's benefit converts into the belief that the State exists for the benefit of its individuals. Spencer claims that socialism forms in a militant, feudal type of state and opposes industrialization. Socialism needs centralization, government power, apathy and individual subordination. Government interference in economic relationships sanctions industrial adjustment that should be left to self-adjust. Spencer opposes wage-earning class rule despite the chaos and brutality of the social system that surrounds him.

The Evolution of Morals describes a new morality Spencer is sensitive to. Social systems are losing the moral code of a traditional faith. Supernatural sanctions of right conduct are being replaced by natural sanctions that develop from biology. The specific





needs of adaptation vary from place to place and affect specific ideas of good. These facts conflict with the belief of an inborn moral sense. However, they may assume certain moral conceptions are acquired by race and are hereditary with individuals. Europe and America claim to be pacifist and Christian but act on the militaristic code of marauding Teutonic nations. Spencer calls war wholesale cannibalism that should be denounced. The real rights of man are the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness on equal terms. Human society's natural evolution brings society nearer to a perfect state.

The First Principles includes the first obstacle termed the Unknowable. Ironically, this term logically implies some degree of knowledge. Spencer claims the homogeneous, comprised of likes, is more unstable than the heterogeneous, comprised of different parts. The evolutionary process leads to homogeneity which is its starting point. Spencer's method begins scientifically, with observing, but he concludes with a process of amassing information to support his conclusion rather than with a process of objective evaluation of all consequences. Spencer admits his evolution is based on Lamarck's theory and not Darwin. Spencer claims mind is the subjective accompaniment of mechanically evolved nerve processes. He uses evolution and progress synonymously in his assumptions. He exaggerates virtues of the industrial regime and is blind to the English exploitation before state mitigation. Spencer spans two eras. His politics forms during laissez-faire policies under the influence of Adam Smith. His later ideas form during England's struggle to correct abuses of industrialism. Spencer argues even war should be a private matter.

Spencer's fame is almost immediate. His influence is known all over Europe. Spencer believes his significance is in his written works. He refuses to discuss them with the many visitors that come to see him. Spencer is sincere and offends every group because he is not biased on any subject. His fame decays from the English-Hegelian reaction against positivism. He summarizes his time like no other man. He achieves a masterful coordination of such vast knowledge that the sheer size of his work silences criticism.

Spencer's engineering background contributes to his focus on approaches that quantify philosophical inquiry. England's Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century creates an emphasis on using and developing new sciences to sustain it. These two factors and evolution in Spencer's thought lead him to conclude the same principles of evolution that apply in biology may apply to all sciences. Extrapolating from that idea, he assumes all philosophical inquiry should be limited by scientific methods, called positivism. Despite practical training as an engineer, Spencer ironically quits his job to live from hand to mouth while working on the development of his philosophy. However he does exhibit some consistency in agreeing with Schopenhauer that human effort is futile. Spencer claims his formula confirms that instability of the homogeneous causes continuing cycles of evolution and dissolution.

Unlike his intellectual colleague Schopenhauer, the fame of Spencer's work is virtually immediate. He is equally a writer of his time, but his time of the Industrial Revolution and positivism is more upbeat, quantitative and forward-looking. Ironically the fame





Schopenhauer seeks but sabotages all his life, Spencer receives without seeking it but nonetheless sabotages anyway. His work is too extensive to be criticized. In addition Spencer refuses to meet with any visitor who wants to discuss it.



# Friedrich Nietzsche

## Friedrich Nietzsche Summary and Analysis

Friedrich Nietzsche perhaps unconsciously denounces influences in his writing to cover up his philosophical origins. He claims the English Darwinians, French positivists and German socialists reject Christian theology but retain its morality. They are no longer practicing Anglicans, Catholics and Lutherans but remain Christians. Nietzsche claims power, not justice, makes differences and destinies. The German Bismarck eliminates Europe's delusions, democracy and ideals in recognizing that nations do not share altruism. He unites German states into an empire that symbolizes a new morality of strength.

Nietzsche is born in 1844 in Prussia. His father dies when he is young. He is raised by women in the household. In 1865 he reads Schopenhauer and sees himself. He is drafted by the military but falls off a horse and is discharged. Nietzsche enters academic life in philology to study literature and related fields. He earns a Ph.D. and the chair in Basle at twenty-five. He plays piano and writes sonatas. Nietzsche studies nearby with composer Richard Wagner in 1869. He begins writing his first book in the Alps when war between Germany and France erupts in 1870. Nietzsche enlists but poor eyesight stops him from soldiering. He begins nursing wounded soldiers but their bleeding makes him sick. He is discharged to return home with the soul of a girl under a warrior's armor.

Nietzsche publishes his first and only completed book, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* in 1872. The Greek tragedy claims pessimism signifies decay but optimism is a sign of superficiality. *The Birth of Tragedy* proves Greeks are not pessimists. Optimism is needed by a strong man who seeks intensity and experience at the cost of tragic woe. Nietzsche returns to Basle to start fifty years of lecturing labor. He writes essays that claim morality and theology must be reconstructed to fit the growth of evolutionary theory. He claims the function of life is to develop and elevate superior personalities. Nietzsche sees Wagner in Sorrento. Wagner talks about his new Christian opera but Nietzsche walks away and never talks to him again. Nietzsche does not forgive Wagner for seeing moral value and beauty in Christianity despite its theological defects.

In 1879, Nietzsche is near death. However, he recuperates and writes two works that show his gratitude during convalescence. He lives alone unable to find happiness with man or woman. He returns to the Alps where he is inspired to write his greatest work. He finds a new god Zoroaster whom he writes about in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. This is his answer to Wagner's Christian opera that Nietzsche finishes whilst, ironically, Wagner dies in Vienna. It is a masterpiece he publishes himself. He sells forty copies and gives away another seven. Nietzsche's atheism is delivered by Zarathustra coming down from a mountain. Zarathustra asks if godliness means gods but no God. Nietzsche makes God in his own image and himself immortal in theories of superman and Eternal Recurrence.



Zarathustra becomes the Gospel on which Nietzsche's other works comment. There are two contrary valuations of human behavior, the master and the herd. A master's morality is the classic standard from the Romans. Herd morality is from the Asian standard where subjection is humility and helplessness is altruism. Honor is pagan, Roman, feudal and aristocratic in comparison to conscience that is Jewish, Christian and democratic. The world and flesh symbolize evil. Virtue is proven in poverty. Strong men do not conceal desire with reason since they simply will. Desire of a master soul is its own justification. The morality of Europe is of the herd and the strong may no longer use their strength. Nietzsche claims the best in man is strength of will, power and permanence of passion.

Nietzsche states morality lies in strength, not in kindness. Consequently the goal of man's effort is development of stronger individuals, not of all individuals. He claims society is designed to enhance the power and personality of the individual not the group. Nietzsche's initial idea is a super race but later becomes the superior individual rising out of mankind's mediocrity. His superiority comes from deliberate breeding and careful nurture, not natural selection. Nietzsche claims love should invalidate marriage. Only the best should marry each other. Good birth is vital for nobility. Good is all that increases power in man, and bad comes from weakness. The highest power is to discipline oneself and have a purpose for which one will do almost anything except betray a friend.

The political path to reach superman is aristocracy. Democracy is a danger that must be abolished. Christ's triumph initiates democratic belief. The first step for superior men is the destruction of Christianity. Europe's loss of control to Christianity ends aristocracy until Teutonic warriors overrun the land and renew masculine virtues. Their ruling stock is corrupted by Catholic praise of feminine virtues, the Reformation's Puritan and plebeian ideal and intermarriage with inferior stock. Protestantism, beer and Wagnerian opera dull the German wit. Nietzsche claims German power of organization and the potential resources of Russian materials and men combined can make an age of great politics. Russians have the advantages over Westerners with strong government and no parliamentary imbecility. Russia could master Europe. The English corrupt the French with democratic delusions.

Democracy drifts with permission given to each part of an organism to do as it pleases. Mediocrity is worshiped and excellence is hated. Great men are unwilling to submit to the indignity of elections. Nietzsche claims marriage causes fulfillment of woman and narrowing of man. Many philosophers die when their child is born. Feminism, socialism and anarchism are the litter of democracy. Nature thrives on differentiation and socialism is anti-biological. Leaders of democracy are not as fearful as those who think revolts can escape subordination, the natural result of their incompetence and laziness. A slave is nobler than his master because a man of money is envied but is the victim of routine and busy-ness. Politics' problem is to prevent generally short-sighted businessmen from ruling. The born aristocrat is trained to statesmanship. The ideal society is divided into three classes of producer, official and ruler. Actual government work is menial. The rulers are philosopher-statesmen not office-holders. They are like Plato's guardians.



Nietzsche's beautiful poem has brilliance due to exaggeration, an interesting but neurotic egotism and a delight in shocking. He does not favor morality. Nietzsche does not prove, but announces with imagination rather than logic. He is to the philosophy of his age as much as the culmination of the Romantic Movement is to Wagner's music. He finishes Rousseau's thought. Zarathustra is safest from criticism because it is most obscure. The universal will to power is not necessarily universally shared by all. It is a delusion to consider all great ages aristocratic. Much creative work in art and literature is done by middle classes. Nietzsche speaks with bitterness but sincerity that clears the air.

Nietzsche's intensity of thought consumes him prematurely. As he grows older he grows in bitterness and attacks persons and ideas. In January 1889, he suffers a fit of apoplexy. He blindly stumbles to his attic room where he dashes off four letters. He is found mad, playing the piano, singing and crying. He is taken to an asylum but then retrieved by his mother who dies in 1897. His sister takes care of him until his death in 1900.

Nietzsche denounces the philosophical thought of previous philosophers, presumably to deny them any credit in the development of his work. Denial of his origins may be a metaphor for his philosophy of power rather than justice. Like Spencer, Nietzsche finds an understanding of himself in Schopenhauer. Nietzsche's life experiences of military discharges for falling off a horse, poor eyesight and getting sick at the sight of blood reinforce that understanding. There are significant differences from Schopenhauer, including his enjoyment of music, specifically Wagner, his employment over fifty years of lecturing and his belief that optimism is required for a strong man to overcome tragedy. There are also similarities—a life alone, without finding happiness with another and the attack of others for their belief. Nietzsche takes European Christianity full circle from Plato's aristocratic guardians as Catholic priests to the denial of Christianity and democracy as starting point in the political path to his aristocratic superman.



# Contemporary European Philosophers

## Contemporary European Philosophers Summary and Analysis

Contemporary European philosophers discussed by Durant include Bergson, Croce and Bertrand Russell. Up to this time, the revolt against materialism is primarily a conflict between physics and psychology. Philosophical speculation has a materialistic bias from mathematics and mechanics through the developing sciences. In addition, the expanding societal needs stimulate industry and physics. The successful sciences become models of philosophy. Descartes claims that philosophy is thinking and therefore being is ignored. Western Europe emphasizes the industrialization of material things beyond speculation. Spencer's system focuses a mechanical viewpoint. His thinking grows obsolete because biological replaces physical thought. The world's secret is perceived to be in movement of life rather than the inertia of things. Life is more basic than force in Schopenhauer and Bergson expands the concept. Henri Bergson is born in 1859, in Paris, of French and Jewish parents. He studies mathematics and physics. However, his analytic skills are a better fit to the metaphysics that underlies science. He becomes a philosophy teacher in 1878. He writes his first major work, *Time and Free-will* in 1888. He becomes a professor in 1900 at the College of France where he remains until his death in 1941. In 1907, he becomes a famous popular philosopher with his *Creative Evolution*. He begins to doubt Spencer.

Bergson argues the natural tendency is materialism because thought occurs in time and space. The characteristics of time enable past time to endure and nothing of it be quite lost. The future is never the same as the past because its accumulation continues. A living being is a center of action that embodies possible activity. Man is a center of creative evolution. Memory recalls past perceptions relating to the present perception to suggest a decision for action. Unlike instinctual animal variation, human consciousness can act freely. Consciousness is distinct from the organism, but is limited by its characteristics. Theoretically, all living things may have consciousness that accompanies life. Man thinks of mind and thought as matter and brain. Intellect develops in evolution. It experiences material spatial objects to form concepts and laws. Like moving pictures, human intellect experiences a series of states without continuity of life. Exact science approximates one point in time, not living time. Direct perception is intuition and a most direct examination possible to a human mind. Direct perception enables feeling the presence of mind.

Bergson's idea differs from the mechanical struggle and destruction described by Darwin and Spencer. Darwinism argues the evolution of organs and functions but not instinct or acquired habit. Accordingly, instincts and habits must appear in full strength. If they are not strong, a weaker state may not survive evolution. Bergson claims the design of things is an inward determination to grow its parts by function and goal of design. This inward determination overcomes limits of matter. A persistently creative life



is his meaning of God and Life as one. God is finite, limited by matter and overcome painfully. Bergson opposes refuting philosophy as time lost. Truth that remains is a positive contribution. Bergson's style expresses the traditions of French prose. He assumes the intellect catches only states, not the flow of reality and life. Ideas are not points selected by memory in a flow of thought, but thought is a stream of transitive ideas described by James. Bergson sees impulse and desire as active forces in evolution. He rejects Spencer's mechanistic integration of matter and dissipated motion. Before Bergson men are cogs and wheels in a huge dead machine. After Bergson man writes his own part in the drama of creation.

Benedetto Croce is an unlikely transition to comparison of their thought. Bergson is a mystic and clear writer compared to the sceptic Croce who writes with German obscurity. Croce is raised as an Italian Catholic who retains only the scholasticism and beauty of his religious background. Italian philosophy remains infertile over the hundred year period, primarily due to Scholastic attitudes and methods. The Italian artists and men of culture are unconcerned with morals or theology, so Thomas Aquinas is their official philosopher. Croce is born in 1866 in a small town. He is so well-trained in Catholic theology that he becomes an atheist for balance. He lives life as a student and only reluctantly accepts a position as minister of Public Education. He is subsequently chosen to be a senator and becomes a modern-day philosopher-senator. He denounces the 1914 war as suicidal mania because the economic conflict interrupts growth of the European mind.

His first book is a series of articles on the economics of Karl Marx. Croce elevates the idea of Utility to the level of Goodness, Beauty and Truth. He claims Marx and Engel's incomplete theory draws attention to underrated and ignored economic data. Croce does not accept materialism as a mature method of thought. He is an idealist that recognizes only Hegel's philosophy. Croce claims reality is an idea and all philosophy is reducible to logic. Truth is a matter of perfect relations among ideas. Philosophy is a study of the concrete universal and science is a study of the abstract universal. Ironically, since Croce is a scholastic by background, his concrete universal is universally abstract. His writing uses puzzling distinctions that exhaust the subject and tire the reader. Croce uses excess abstractions and technical words that bloat his work. He contrasts idealism with rejection of religion and freedom of will without immortality of soul. Beauty and culture are his religion. Croce's work is a study in unresolved and conflicting notions. He subscribes to Rousseau's idea that history is a process of choosing a lie that is closest to the truth.

Bertrand Russell is the youngest and most virile European thinker. He comes from one of the oldest and most famous English families. There are two distinct periods in his life. The first Russell changes during the war into a second, mystical, communist Russell. His characteristic work, *Mysticism and Logic* refutes the illogical nature of mysticism. In 1914, his style is of a cold-blooded abstraction speaking on epistemology at Columbia. He is initially unimpressed with Bergson's work. Russell is drawn to mathematics by its rigid impersonality and objectivity, where there is eternal truth and absolute knowledge. According to Russell, Plato and Spinoza are right, the world of universals is the world of being, and is unchangeable, rigid, exact and delights the mathematician and others who





prefer perfection to life. His inability to define Christianity in mathematical terms leads Russell to agnosticism except for its moral code.

Bertrand Russell after the war bursts forth as a man of infinite courage and passionate lover of humanity. He is horrified by the bloody conflict and rebels. He decides to determine causes of the war and finds in socialism a cause of the disease. He believes it is private property and a cure is communism. Since the state protects private property that contributes to the problem, it is an evil. He believes freedom is the supreme good that enables life and personality to develop. Russell formulates a concept that growth of each individual or community should minimize the cost to others. Education opens to Utopia.

Russell's optimistic social philosophy leaves behind the rigidity of his pre-war period. Mathematics is no longer the sole criterion of his ideas. He visits Russia for a first-hand view of a socialist society. However, he is disappointed and offended by the lack of free speech, free press and its monopolistic and systematic use of propaganda. He also visits China where he feels more at home. China has a lesser amount of mechanism and slower lifestyle. He develops new perspectives and better understanding of a profounder culture as his philosophic systems loosen. Traveling the world convinces Russell it is too big for his mathematical formulae. He is an older and wiser man, more lovable and capable of profound metaphysics and subtle math. He is a scholar, gentleman and better Christian than many who claim the word.

The developing sciences over time cause a materialistic bias that stimulates industry and physics as models of philosophy. Western Europe has a greater need to industrialize material things than to speculate on their origin or significance. Bergson develops the concept of Schopenhauer that life is more basic than force. Bergson claims an internal design of things that expands evolution beyond organs and functions to instinct and acquired habit. Bergson introduces a persistently creative life as his meaning of God—finite but able to overcome the limits of matter. Man is not a cog in a dead machine as Spencer proposes but metaphorically can write his own part in the creation drama. Ironically, Croce's acquired habits as an Italian Catholic well-trained in theology causes him to write his part as that of an atheist for balance. Croce is an idealist committed to thought as the fundamental reality. His work is also voluminous but bloated through use of many more words than necessary. Croce is committed to beauty as truth because to him only beauty is true. Bertrand Russell is committed to mathematics as its eternal truth and absolute knowledge based on rigid impersonality and objectivity. He supports the thought of Plato and Spinoza because of their mathematical appeal to simplicity and precision. The lack of mathematical precision in Christianity leads him to agnosticism. Ironically when Russell travels the world he finds it too big to fit a mathematical formula.



# Contemporary American Philosophers

## Contemporary American Philosophers Summary and Analysis

Contemporary American philosophers include Santayana, James and Dewey. There are two Americas. One America is of European descent on the East coast and the other is of American origin. European America struggles between a British manner of thought as found in New England and a restless, innovating spirit of the newer people. Santayana is born in Spain and is considered American because he lives in America. He is from the East coast European America. The other America is rooted in the native soil. These Americans are practical, hard-headed businessmen. This group includes the politician Lincoln, writers Whitman, Mark Twain and the philosophers William James and John Dewey.

George Santayana is born in 1863 in Madrid Spain. He is brought to America as a child in 1872 and stays until 1912. He studies and teaches at Harvard until his fiftieth year. He is a poet by nature and the noisy pace of American city-life offends him. He writes his first essay in philosophy in 1896. His *The Sense of Beauty* is considered the best American contribution to esthetics. He writes another volume five years later. He works the next seven years preparing five volumes of *The Life of Reason*. This work is famous for its quality. He is seen as a man who feels the lure of beauty and call of truth. He leaves for England in 1923 where he writes *Scepticism and Animal Faith* at the age of sixty.

*Scepticism and Animal Faith* is the door to all of his thinking. Santayana calls it one more system of philosophy, with a smile, in the preface of the book. He considers that only experience of the moment is real and perception is discovery of essence. He accepts idealism as correct but of no significance. The world may be known through ideas but its sensations shows how it behaves may be accepted as true. He accepts that animal faith may be a myth but is a good myth since it is better than any syllogism. This conclusion regarding the philosophy of knowing, or epistemology, finishes his relevant interest in its construction until philosophy begins to deal with the affairs of man.

*The Life of Reason* explains all practical thought and action justified by its fruits in consciousness. Reason unites elements of impulse and ideation to generate the rational animal. Either element operating alone makes man a maniac or a brute. *The Life of Reason* is based on science because it contains all trustworthy knowledge. Santayana accepts analysis of scientific method as a description of regularly observed experiences but not as laws that govern the world. He proposes no new philosophy but application of old philosophies to present life. Santayana agrees with Aristotle's conception of human nature that ideals have a natural basis and everything natural is an ideal development. In natural philosophy, Santayana claims materialism but disagrees with pantheism which he considers a form of atheism. He does believe there is nothing immortal.



Reason in Religion portrays Santayana's love for Catholicism as longing for a woman who deceives him. Because of his believing unbelief this work is a masterpiece. Man has religions Santayana calls remarkable phenomenon. He claims fear first makes the gods. With imagination, man interprets all things anthropomorphically, as if they have the qualities and actions of man. He considers Christianity an unstable combination of Greek theology and Jewish morality in which one must yield. Catholicism enables the Greek and pagan elements to triumph with its Renaissance. Protestantism enables the Hebraic moral code to triumph with its Reformation. Individual interpretation leads to many popular sects and a form of pantheism, or naturalism poetically stated to develop. Santayana is unsympathetic to Protestantism because of his birth and heredity. The beauty of Catholicism appeals to him more than the truth of any other faith. A man of culture does not disturb the myths that comfort and inspire the people.

William James is an American voice and fully American. He is born in New York City in 1842. William is sent with his younger brother Henry to study in France. They both study psychology, one to write fiction like psychology and the other to write psychology like fiction. Henry stays abroad but William returns to study medicine at Harvard in 1870, where he stays to teach until he dies in 1910. William James writes his successful *The Principles of Psychology* in 1890. In it he mixes anatomy, philosophy and analysis. James defines philosophy as thinking about things in the most comprehensive way.

Pragmatism is the direction of his thought to things. He is a realist where thought is a mirror of external and physical reality. They are not separate but in relationship and in context Consciousness is not a thing but a flow and system of relations at which the sequence and relationship of thoughts shed light on the sequence of events and relationship of things with which they coincide. Passion for the immediate, actual and real leads James to pragmatism. He dislikes terms and problems of German metaphysics as unreal and finds the abstractions empty. James reads an article in *Popular Science Monthly* that describes the meaning of an idea through consequences of the action to which it leads. This simple test provides James with defined truth as the "cash-value" of an idea. James changes the discussion of truth from its derivation to that of its consequences to action and the future.

Pluralism is the application of this method to existence and nature of God. Men consider their philosophy based on needs and temperament, not on objective truth. The question of relevance to lives and interests is more meaningful than logic. James believes effective synthesis is pluralistic theism with a finite God who is first among equals. Many gods or polytheism is more directly the religion of common people rather than the monotheism philosophers argue about. A one-God world is a universe where subjects carry out preordained activities of an omnipotent deity. James agrees the universal persistence of belief in God proves its vital and moral value. He is sympathetic to socialism except for its reduced consideration for value of the individual and genius. All things beyond the individual have no value but are just means. James claims government needs a state that understands itself as the trustee and servant of the interests of individual men and women. Pragmatism is rooted in the "practical reason" of Kant, Schopenhauer's will exaltation and Darwin's fittest. His thinking manner is specifically American. James describes it as a new name for old ways of thinking. His



empirical emphasis and new realism shows him to be more of a psychologist than a philosopher. He admits to no solution but another faith.

John Dewey is born in the East in 1859 where he is educated before going west to teach philosophy in the Midwest states. His work in Chicago with education causes his fame to grow. His mission is to remake the schools of the world. Dewey claims the lessons to be learned come through occupation rather than through books. An industrial society should have schools that are miniature workshops and communities that teach through practice.

Dewey's commitment to evolution theory claims that mind and body both are evolving organs in the struggle for existence. He accepts Darwin as the universal starting point. Dewey distrusts Schopenhauer and Bergson as creating world-forces to be unnecessarily worshipped. He rejects metaphysics as echo and disguise of theology whose problems are confused with religion. According to him, the problem of philosophy is to determine how man can learn to control and remake the world to accomplish goals. Philosophy should not analyze sensation and knowledge like psychology but rather synthesizes and coordinates knowledge and desire. The first characteristic that distinguishes thought is to face the facts. He claims instinct is exaggerated in effect and early training is underrated. Any instinct can be modified and controlled by social training just as sex and fighting are. Ideas about unchangeable human nature and omnipotent environment must be unlearned because there is nothing impossible, except that which thinking makes so.

Growth as the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing and refining is the goal of life. Goodness requires ability and virtue will not save us without intelligence. Dewey accepts democracy though he recognizes its faults. Political order should help the individual develop himself and requires sharing in policy and destiny of his particular group. Dewey recognizes aristocracy and monarchy are more efficient than democracy as well as more dangerous. The work of philosophy should apply to social antagonisms. Old problems lose meaning as philosophers get over them. Future philosophy should clarify man's ideas about current strife to become an organ to deal with these conflicts. The most eloquent and subtle living thinkers belong to the cultural traditions of Europe. The ancient dependence of European thought is less since America is in its beginning but young stages of philosophy. Clearing out old traditions is occurring before America can develop native literature and mature philosophy. When America reverences liberty as much as its wealth, it may experience its own Renaissance.

The two personalities of Bertrand Russell parallel the two Americas. Some American philosophy is of European descent that brings European perspective into a new world. The British Russell travels the world to bring perspective into his mathematical concepts. Russell is an abstract idealist until he confronts the real world after the war. A European America philosophy is equally abstract and arid until it confronts the native soil in the practical business-like reality of settling America. Santayana transplants old Aristotelian and Spanish Catholic philosophy and faith into European America. He proposes a form of government called timocracy that is a Platonic form of aristocratic democracy where there is equality of opportunity. William James represents American



philosophy—he is born in New York City. He studies psychology and medicine and mixes anatomy, philosophy and analysis into thinking about things comprehensively. James is a pragmatist, allowing him to be realistic about his thinking. In his philosophy, thought mirrors external and physical reality. Speaking in the most practical terms, he defines truth as the "cash-value" of an idea with actual consequences rather than metaphysical implications. In no other area is pragmatism as useful as that of education in America. Democracy in America is an essential ingredient to Dewey's work in education. He is committed to philosophy as the way to determine how man can learn to control and remake a world to accomplish goals.



# Characters

## Socrates

Socrates is born in 469 B.C. and lives until 399 B.C. He drinks poisonous hemlock at the age of seventy in 399 B.C. Critias is the uncle of Plato and studies under Socrates. Like his pupil Critias, Socrates is an aristocrat. He is considered the intellectual leader of the rich man's revolution against democracy. He is a bald, large, round-faced homely man with deep-set staring eyes and a broad nose. Socrates has an ungainly walk and wearing a rumpled tunic makes it more obvious. He neglects his children and wife. Xanthippe his wife calls him a good for nothing idler. Socrates does not work and is often invited to dinner by disciples. Socrates has a kind and unassuming simplicity. He is beloved by his students and calls himself a seeker of wisdom with no claims to own it. He gathers about himself a mixed group of young, learned men that helps him create European philosophy. His pupils are rich and poor, socialists and anarchists, that meet to walk through the agora with the master, challenging them to define their terms. Socrates claims philosophy begins when one doubts beliefs, dogmas and axioms. He calls himself "the old gad-fly" but opponents call him a corrupter of youth.

He believes the study of man is the worthy subject of philosophy. Socrates develops and uses the Socratic Method to challenge the assumptions of his pupils. He says he believes in one God. Socrates recognizes a moral code cannot be based on an uncertain theology. Intelligence is necessary to manage a state—it must be run by its wisest men with the finest minds. When democracy comes to control Athens, he is condemned to drink poisonous hemlock. Socrates is the first martyr of philosophy, condemned for proclaiming the rights and necessity of free thought and its value to the state. Socrates is attended at death by a friend Crito who calls him the wisest, justest and best of all men he has known.

## Plato

Plato is born in 427 B.C. and lives until 347 B.C. He is twenty-eight when he attends the death of his master Socrates. His birthplace is Greece in the second millennium before the birth of Christ. An interesting geographical feature of his birth country is its coastal structure. Because the coast is irregular, it is difficult for cities and other societies to communicate with each other. Consequently, the thinkers in each of the isolated areas think about the same basic issues that make a functioning society structure. Plato is the nephew of Critias who studies under Socrates. Plato's meeting with Socrates changes his life. Plato is raised in comfort as an athletic youth and successful soldier—this is unusual in a philosopher. He enjoys the sport of Socrates, questioning dialectic. Plato is twenty-eight when Socrates is poisoned by the state. His death causes Plato to scorn democracy. He commits to its destruction and develops a theory of rule by the wisest and the best.





Plato also is suspected by the democratic leaders and he leaves Athens to travel in 399 B.C. He wanders for twelve years visiting the Nile, Italy, Sicily, Judea and other lands. Plato returns to Athens at the age of forty in 387 B.C. where he begins his writing career as a dramatist. Plato writes with an intoxicating mix of philosophy, poetry, science and art. It is difficult to decide whether his written dialogue is literal or figurative. In addition to the Dialogues, he writes *The Republic* and devises the Utopia. In Plato's ideal world, Utopia is ruled by unselfish rulers who are raised to act as guardians only in the interest of their governed people. The test of these philosopher-kings is provided throughout subsequent history by the Catholic Church and its clergy in Europe, the Jesuits rule of Paraguay and the Communist Party in Russia. Plato is beloved by his pupils and is invited to one of their weddings. He naps at the wedding feast and is found in the morning to have died in his sleep in 347 B.C.

## Aristotle

Aristotle is born in 384 B.C. at Stagira, a city in Macedonia and lives until 322 B.C. He is born into a medical family and prepared from birth to become the founder of science. Aristotle's father is a friend and physician to Philip the King of Macedon. There are several stories of his travels but all versions relocate him in Athens to study philosophy under Plato. Aristotle is fifty years younger than Plato. They both share a comparable mental ability. This causes conflict. The relationship of Plato and Aristotle gets worse over time. Aristotle forms a school of oratory in Athens that Hermias attends. When Hermias is made autocrat of the city-state Atarneus, he invites Aristotle to join his court. Philip King of Macedon calls Aristotle to teach Alexander, his grandson who later becomes Alexander the Great.

One story indicates the youthful Aristotle squanders his family wealth in riotous living, joins the army and then travels to Athens at thirty where he studies under Plato for eight years. Another version of the story has Aristotle in Athens at eighteen to study under Plato for twenty years, although still considers him reckless. Aristotle does spend a lot of money collecting books. Plato calls his house the house of the reader. Aristotle is considered a bookworm. He is beloved and cherished by Alexander the Great who dies in 323 B.C. When Alexander dies, Athens claims independence. Aristotle is fearful of being tried and murdered like Socrates. Consequently he leaves town but then gets sick and disappointed, and commits suicide or otherwise dies alone a year later in 322 B.C.

## Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon is born in 1561 and lives until 1626. His political career begins with his birth into the family traditions of Elizabethan England. All of his relatives are well-placed within English aristocracy. His father is the Keeper of the Seal for twenty years for Queen Elizabeth. Bacon's mother, Lady Anne Cooke is a linguist and theologian. She writes her correspondence in Greek to bishops. She instructs Francis at home until he is sent to Trinity College Cambridge at twelve. He remains there for three years. Francis decides to leave because he dislikes texts, methods and studying Aristotle. He is hostile





to the cult of Aristotle. While at Trinity College he resolves to turn philosophy from scholastic arguments to illumination and increase of human good.

Francis Bacon accepts appointment to the English ambassador's staff in France and begins his political career. However, the aristocratic young man loses his father and his inheritance in 1579. He returns to London to begin a life of forced simplicity in the practice of law. He is elected to Parliament in 1583. His popularity gets him regularly re-elected by his friends and constituents. A loyal supporter is involved in a treasonous scheme. His generous friend the Earl of Essex gives Bacon an estate at Twickenham, a gift which should have endeared him to him. Essex is loved by Elizabeth but does not return her love so becomes hated. Essex conspires to imprison Elizabeth and Bacon warns him. Bacon subsequently prosecutes, tries for treason and executes Essex. Bacon's treatment of his friend lessens his popularity and increases his political enemies. At forty-five he marries and in 1606 is made Solicitor-General. By the age of fifty-seven in 1618 he becomes Lord Chancellor. Bacon lives a spendthrift life and eventually is arrested for his debts. Francis Bacon is considered the most powerful mind of modern times as he announces Europe's coming of age. He dies of heart disease at 65 in 1626

## Baruch Spinoza

Baruch Spinoza is born in 1632 and lives until 1677. He is born into the Espinoza family of Portuguese Jews. Baruch Spinoza becomes one of the greatest modern philosophers. His father is a successful merchant. Baruch is not interested in his father's business. He prefers to spend time in the synagogue studying religion and his Jewish background. His education begins in the synagogue studying Jewish religion and history. He is a brilliant student who learns the Bible, then the Talmud and writings of Maimonides, ben Gerson and others. However, Spinoza finds contradictions in the Bible that Maimonides does not resolve. He is curious about Christian thinkers. Baruch studies Latin from a Dutch scholar and critic of creeds and governments. Through studying Latin he reads Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the atomists, the Stoics and the Scholastics. The synagogue elders fear consequences from their Christian hosts in the wake of the behavior of an apparent heretic in the community. Spinoza is excommunicated from the synagogue in 1656 as his punishment for asking questions about Jewish and Christian beliefs.

He concludes that the object of philosophy is to perceive unity in diversity, mind in matter, and matter in mind. He seeks the synthesis where opposites and contradictions meet and merge. He believes the highest knowledge of universal unity is the intellectual equivalent of the love of God. The mind knows the external world only through the sensation and perception that the world impresses on the mind. Spinoza accepts Descartes conception that there is a homogeneous substance under all forms of matter and another homogeneous substance underlying all forms of mind. These two substances challenge Spinoza's theory of unity.



Retirement and death in isolation from the Jewish community is the result of Spinoza's philosophic inquiry. He moves to an attic room outside of Amsterdam and changes his name from the Jewish Baruch to Benedict. He moves in with Mennonite Christians who understand how heretics are treated. He works in the optical trade to support himself with a manual skill. The volume of lenses he works on is adequate for a moderate income but not enough to make him successful. The household moves five years later to live near Leyden.

## Voltaire

Voltaire is born in 1694 and lives until 1778. He is born Francois Marie Arouet in Paris. His father is a successful notary or public official. Francois' mother is an aristocrat. His aunt sees potential greatness in her young nephew. She leaves money for him in her will to buy books. Despite his aunt's hopes, Francois' father predicts literature as a profession will make him useless to society, a burden to his family and hungry. At twenty-one years old Francois writes two poems that criticize France's interim ruler. The Regent imprisons him in the Bastille in 1717. Francois Arouet takes the pen-name Voltaire and writes his first epic story during eleven months in prison. He is released as an innocent man by the Regent who also gives him a pension. Voltaire thanks the Regent for his board but asks to find his own room in the future.

Voltaire's first play, produced in 1718, breaks all Paris performance records. He nets 4000 francs from the play that he invests successfully. His next play fails. Over time Voltaire becomes more sensitive to public opinion. In 1726 his impertinent reply and challenge to a duel with another government official lands him back in the Bastille. He is exiled to England for the next three years. Voltaire is described by some as a man who has all the powers of hell in him. Years later he returns to France. Voltaire suffers from the faults of his time in Paris in 1742. Although he is considered kind and free with his energy and money, he is as diligent helping his friends as he is in destroying enemies with his pen. Voltaire produces ninety-nine volumes of wide-ranging and sparkling writing. He is miserly with his time but only because he has so much yet to do. Work keeps him from suicide during his eighty-three years of life. Voltaire's books make France begin to think, a process that once started is impossible to stop.

In the last days of Voltaire's life he becomes the laughing philosopher, tending his garden, something he believes is the best thing to do on earth. He is eighty-three and longs to see Paris before he dies. His doctors advise against the trip but he chooses to die in his own way. Three hundred visitors welcome him as a king. He is sick and dying so a priest is called to hear his confession. After he confesses his sins, the priest refuses to give Voltaire absolution without his signed profession of full faith in the Catholic Church. He refuses but makes a statement of his belief in God. Sick and weak he gets up from his death bed to visit the Academy where his play Irene is performed. He returns home exhausted and dies on May 30, 1778. Paris priests refuse him a Christian burial. His friends take him to a country priest to bury. In 1791, Louis XVI moves his remains to the Pantheon. Voltaire is taken through Paris with 100,000 in his procession and 600,000 more watching.



## Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant is born in 1724 and lives until 1804. His family comes from Scotland a hundred years earlier. Kant himself is born in Königsberg, Prussia. As a child he spends his days totally immersed in religion. Kant does not attend church as an adult. He tutors a short period of time in a nearby village but otherwise never leaves his birth town. He has limited exposure to the world around him but is exposed to the skeptical trends of the time. He is influenced as well by those whose theories he challenges. He spends almost sixty years in seclusion and quiet development of the critical philosophy that eventually rules European speculation.

Kant is made a professor of logic and metaphysics in 1770. He writes about planets, earthquakes, fire, wind and other physical subjects. Kant is a timid and modest professor, loved by his students, who creates a metaphysical tempest that startles the world. Quietly he writes and rewrites his great work for fifteen years, unknown to other metaphysicians. At fifty-seven years old in 1781, he finishes a work that startles and upsets the philosophic world. He wakes the world from its dogmatism with his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant calls for the equality of opportunity to develop, allowing the application of ability, and rejects benefits of birth and class. His age diminishes his energy and ability to continue the political fight, and at the age of 79 and senile he dies in 1804.

## Arthur Schopenhauer

Arthur Schopenhauer is born in 1788 and lives until 1860. Schopenhauer is born in Danzig, Poland. The family moves to Hamburg in 1793 when Poland is annexed. Arthur's youth exposes him to business and finance which gives him a blunt manner, realistic mind and knowledge of the world and of men. His mother is cold, competitive, heartless and unloving which seems to doom him to pessimism. His unsatisfying experience with love, the world through school and the university leaves him gloomy, cynical, suspicious and obsessed with fear and evil fancies. In 1813, he considers volunteering for the war of liberation in opposition to Napoleon. Schopenhauer reconsiders and retires to the country to write his doctoral dissertation in philosophy.

After completing it he begins work on his masterpiece, *The World as Will and Idea*. He sends the completed manuscript along with his statement of great praise for it to a publisher. The book gets little attention because Europe is too poor and exhausted to read about its own condition. The publisher informs him years later that most of the edition is sold as waste paper. Unwilling to accept this result, he likens his situation to a musician performing to a deaf audience who cannot hear his genius. His later works, for the most part, are commentaries on this work.

Schopenhauer travels through France and Austria where he is struck by the chaos, poverty, unrest and misery of the towns he sees. The Revolution is dead and the life of hope and Utopias is gone out of the soul of Europe. The poor may have the consolation of religious hope but the upper classes lose it and their riches too. Conditions in 1818



make it hard to believe in an intelligent and benevolent God. The seeds of a whirlwind sown by Voltaire remain as the harvest for Schopenhauer to reap. Some believe this is vengeance of a just God on the Age of Reason and unbelief. Schopenhauer and others believe there is no divine order or heavenly hope. The chaos of Europe mirrors that of the universe.

He is invited to present his philosophy at a university lecture in Berlin in 1822. He schedules his lectures at the same time Hegel is scheduled to teach. He assumes the students will view both of them equally important in posterity. Schopenhauer lectures to empty seats and takes out his revenge with bitter attacks on Hegel's work. Schopenhauer flees Berlin when cholera breaks out. On his seventieth birthday he receives congratulations from all over the world. Two years later in 1860 he sits down for breakfast alone. He is found dead at table an hour later by his landlady.

## Herbert Spencer

Herbert Spencer is born in 1820 and lives until 1903. He is born in Derby into a family of dissenting thinkers. Spencer is an engineer by training and profession—this background contributes to his practical nature. His thinking is logical. He makes clear distinctions between a priori and a posteriori considerations. Spencer is an exceptional organizer who can synthesize and coordinate information above and beyond his own observations and perceptions. For a time he works as editor of the *Economist*. Ironically he resigns from this job to live from hand to mouth despite the inheritance he gets from an uncle. In an attempt to improve his finances, he sells advance subscriptions for awhile. Fortunately, his admirers give him a gift of securities from which he is able to live on the dividends and interest they pay. Spencer theorizes that evolution may be applied in all sciences like it is in biology.

## Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche is born in 1844 Prussia and lives until 1900. His father dies when he is young. Friedrich is raised by the women of the household. At the age of twenty-one, he reads Schopenhauer and discovers similarities with him. Nietzsche is drafted into the military but falls off a horse and is discharged. Subsequently he enters academic life in philology to study literature and related fields. He earns his Ph.D. and the chair in Basle at twenty-five. He becomes a pianist and writes sonatas. In 1869, Nietzsche begins to study nearby under the composer Richard Wagner. He begins to write his first book in the Alps but is interrupted by the war between Germany and France in 1870.

Nietzsche rejoins the army but his poor eyesight disables him again from soldiering. He begins nursing wounded soldiers but the sight of blood makes him sick. Nietzsche is discharged from the military again. He leaves the battlefield to return home with the soul of a girl in warrior's armor. Nietzsche sees Wagner again in Sorrento. However when Wagner talks about Parsifal, his new Christian opera, Nietzsche walks away. He refuses



to speak with Wagner again. Nietzsche does not forgive him for seeing moral value and beauty in Christianity beyond its theological defects.

## Henri Bergson

Henri Bergson is born in 1859 and lives until 1941. He is born of French and Jewish parents in Paris. Initially he studies mathematics and physics. His analytic skills lead him to metaphysics which underlies all science. He is appointed to teach philosophy in 1878. Bergson writes his first major work, *Time and Free-will* in 1888. He becomes a professor in 1900 at the College of France. He remains an instructor there until his death in 1941. In 1907, he becomes the most popular philosopher in the world with his *Creative Evolution*. Although a youthful believer in Spencer, his fame causes him doubt.

## Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell is born in 1872 and lives until 1970. Bertrand Russell is born into one of the oldest and most famous English families. He is described as the youngest and most virile European thinker. There are two distinct periods in his life. The first Russell dies during the war and the second, mystic communist Russell arises after the war. In 1914 he is a cold-blooded theorist speaking at Columbia on epistemology. Russell's characteristic work, *Mysticism and Logic*, attacks the illogic of mysticism. He appears after the war as a man of infinite courage and passionate lover of humanity. The bloody conflict horrifies him. Russell rebels against it and decides to determine the causes of the war. He finds in socialism the cause—private property. He claims communism is the cure.

## George Santayana

George Santayana is born in 1863 and lives until 1952. He is born in Madrid, Spain and is considered American only because he lives in America. Santayana is culturally of the former East coast European America. He is brought to America as a child in 1872 where he grows up and stays until 1912. Santayana studies and teaches at Harvard through his fiftieth year. He writes his first essay in philosophy in 1896. He is a poet by nature and the noisy pace of American city-life offends him. His book *The Sense of Beauty* is considered the best American contribution to esthetics.



# Objects/Places

## Greece appears in non-fiction

Greece is a large island located in the Mediterranean Sea. The philosophical history of civilization and culture begins in Greece. The coastline of Greece is rough and irregular. Its features form isolated regions that make communication across the land difficult and dangerous. Because of this isolation, Greece has many city-states that develop separate economies, cultures, religions and governments.

## Athens appears in non-fiction

Athens is a well-known city-state of Greece. Athens is located farthest east of the larger cities of Greece. Its port and navy help it to develop into a busy trading center. Athens claims to be a democratic city-state with 400,000 residents but includes 250,000 slaves. Athens' leaders struggle with one another to develop forms of democracy and aristocracy. Critias leads Athens' oligarchic party to abandon democracy because it is inefficient in war.

## Sparta appears in non-fiction

Sparta is a well-known city-state of Greece. Sparta joins with Athens to overcome the Persians in battle. Sparta is located inland with no access to the sea. After the war, it lapses into an isolated agricultural area.

## Utopia appears in non-fiction

Utopia is an ideal city-state of Plato's imagination and theory. Plato's Utopia is ruled by elite philosopher-kings he calls guardians. These guardians rule the state and citizens but have no responsibility since they cannot own property. Plato's ideal city-state is not tested in the world of reality. The ruler of Syracuse in 387 B.C. wants Plato to change his kingdom into Utopia until he learns he has to become a philosopher and can no longer rule as king. Francis Bacon describes a utopia in the New Atlantis which he adapts from Plato's legend of Atlantis the sunken continent. New Atlantis governors control nature rather than man. Bacon's utopia guides its citizens in peace and modest sufficiency by the wisest men.

## Stagira appears in non-fiction

Stagira is a city in Macedon. It is located two hundred miles north of Athens. Aristotle and Alexander the Great are both born in Stagira, Macedon.



## **The Lyceum appears in non-fiction**

The Lyceum is the school Aristotle forms in Athens, Greece. The Lyceum teaches biology and natural sciences. Aristotle grows a zoological garden from specimens Alexander sends his former teacher. Alexander also helps Aristotle finance his Lyceum.

## **The Academy appears in non-fiction**

The Academy is the school Plato founds in Athens, Greece. Plato's work in his Academy includes teaching mathematics and speculative and political philosophy. Aristotle studies initially under Plato at the Academy.

## **Rome appears in non-fiction**

Rome is a city in Italy. In 46 B.C. Roman soldiers take ideas they find in Greece back to Rome along with their other spoils. Zeno's stoicism is similar to Roman thought. The Roman Lucretius writes about fears of heaven and hell like Epicurus. Works of another Roman, Epictetus move the Greco-Roman soul from paganism to a new faith. Lucretius writes of decaying Roman agriculture. Rome's wealth falls to poverty, disintegration, decadence and apathy. Roman roads are not repaired, trade falters, pagan culture yields to Oriental cults. Rome's Empire develops into Rome's Papacy.

## **The Church appears in non-fiction**

The Church refers to the Catholic Church. By the thirteenth century the Church owns one-third of Europe. For a thousand years, the Church unites the European continent with a common faith and supernatural sanctions. Scholastic philosophy uses tools of faith and reason interchangeably to support untested assumptions and foregone conclusions.

## **The Bastille appears in non-fiction**

The Bastille is a prison in Paris, France. Francis Marie Arouet is initially imprisoned in the Bastille in 1717 where he takes the pen-name Voltaire. He writes his first epic story during eleven months imprisoned there. The Bastille is a symbol of the abusive power of French rulers and bureaucrats. Voltaire is arrested and imprisoned in the Bastille several times for criticizing or insulting minor French authorities.





# Themes

## Philosophers and Government Authority

From the beginning of philosophy with the early Greeks, thinkers regularly get in trouble with the government to which they are subject. One of the continuing areas of interest in the history of philosophy is politics. Socrates claims philosophy begins at the point when assumptions and ideas are challenged. Philosophers question the methods and manners by which they are ruled. Consequently political philosophers are at risk of getting in trouble because of challenging authority. A continuing theme in Durant's work is the frequency with which philosophers risk getting in trouble with their government

Socrates is the first martyr of philosophy. He is condemned by the government to drink poisonous hemlock at the age of seventy in 399 B.C. Ironically, he is condemned for proclaiming the rights and necessity of free thought and its value to the state. He calls himself "the old gadfly" but opponents call him a corrupter of youth. When democracy takes control of Athens, the new rulers consider Socrates the intellectual leader of the rich man's revolt against democracy. Plato is a twenty-eight year old pupil when Socrates is condemned to death. Plato is also suspected by the democratic rulers. He leaves Athens in 399 B.C. Socrates' death makes Plato scorn democracy and he commits to destroy it. Plato formulates an elitist theory of rule by the wisest and the best. Plato comes back to Athens where Aristotle becomes one of his disciples. Aristotle is a friend and teacher of Alexander the Great. Alexander rules but when he dies Athens claims independence. Aristotle is afraid of being tried and murdered like Socrates so he leaves Athens as well.

Francis Bacon is an aristocratic politician by birth and profession. At forty-five he is made Solicitor-General and by fifty-seven he becomes Lord Chancellor. However, the way Bacon treats his powerful friends lessens his popularity but increases his political enemies. Regardless of government connections, Bacon is a spendthrift and eventually is arrested for his debts. Voltaire seems to make a career of getting and staying in trouble with the government and other authorities. At twenty-one years old, Francois Arouet, as he is named at birth, writes two poems criticizing France's interim ruler. The Regent imprisons him in the Bastille for the first time in 1717. While there he writes his first successful play and changes his name from Arouet to Voltaire. In 1726 he makes an impertinent reply and challenges another government official to a duel. The official wants to send him back to the Bastille. Voltaire leaves for England where he writes Letters on the English that criticizes France and lays a theoretical basis for Revolution. He returns to France in 1729. He is not aware that a publisher secretly publishes Letters on the English and distributes them without Voltaire's permission. Voltaire fears he may be sent back to the Bastille so he elopes to Cirey with the young wife of a French Marquis. When she dies in childbirth, he accepts Prince Frederick's offer to join him in his court in Potsdam. Voltaire avoids state dinners but does not avoid irritating his government host with his writing. He leaves Potsdam for Frankfurt and in 1754 leaves



for Geneva to live safe from government autocrats in Paris and Berlin. Ironically, after his death King Louis XVI honors him by relocating his remains to the Pantheon in Paris.

## Philosophers and Finance

Generally philosophers' thought may include materialism as an idea but rarely as riches. Even if they are from an aristocratic family and have inherited wealth, they end up poor. Another theme in the philosophers Durant selects for this work is their lack of financial success. Generally they are poor yet their great minds and ideas live in posterity. The rhetorical question remains open, if they are so smart why are they not rich?

Socrates wears a rumpled tunic. He neglects his wife Xanthippe who calls him a good for nothing idler. Socrates does not work and is often invited to dinner by disciples. His student Plato is raised in comfort as an aristocratic athletic youth and successful soldier. Durant claims this is unusual in a philosopher. The young Aristotle squanders his family wealth in riotous living and spends a lot of money collecting books in Athens.

Francis Bacon is appointed to begin a political career but then loses his father and his inheritance. His friend the Earl of Essex gives him an estate but Bacon prosecutes him for treason. Bacon lives a spendthrift life and eventually is arrested for his debts. Baruch Spinoza prefers studying religion and his Jewish background in the synagogue. He works in the optical trade. The volume of lenses he works on is adequate for his moderate income but not enough to make him successful. Hegel is certified in theology and philology but not in philosophy. He wants a place to live that has simple food, many books and good beer. Spencer is an engineer by training and profession who resigns his job. He lives from hand to mouth despite the inheritance he gets from an uncle. His admirers give him a gift of securities from which he is able to live on the dividends and interest they pay. Arthur Schopenhauer receives an inherited interest in his father's firm that provides him moderate comfort. Schopenhauer lives the last thirty years of his life in two rooms of a boarding house with his dog. Croce is an Italian Catholic who prefers life as a student but reluctantly accepts a position as minister of Public Education. Russell rebels against war and decides to determine its cause. He agrees with socialism that the cause is private property. He claims communism is the cure.

Voltaire's father is a successful notary or public official. Francois' mother is an aristocrat. His aunt leaves money for him in her will to buy books. His father predicts literature as a profession will make him useless to society, a burden to his family and hungry. When he is released, the Regent gives him a pension. Voltaire thanks the Regent for his board but asks to find his own room in the future. Voltaire's first play, produced in 1718, breaks all Paris performance records. He nets 4000 francs from the play that he invests successfully. He is considered kind and free with his energy and money. In the last days of Voltaire's life, he becomes the laughing philosopher tending his garden which he believes is the best thing to do on earth despite his wealth.



## Philosophers Isolation and Travel

The theme of isolation and travel is recurrent throughout Durant. After returning from isolation and travel, new perspective is introduced into the philosophers' life that causes a change in their lifestyle.

Greece has an irregular coastal structure that makes it difficult for city-states to communicate with each other. Each isolated area must think through basic issues to cause its social structure to function. Plato leaves Athens to travel in 399 B.C and wanders for twelve years visiting the Nile, Italy, Sicily, Judea and other lands. There are several stories of Aristotle's travels but all versions put him in Athens to study under Plato. Aristotle is fearful of being tried and leaves town but then gets sick, disappointed and dies alone a year later in 322 B.C.

Francis Bacon is sent to Trinity College Cambridge at twelve where he remains for three years. While attending Trinity he resolves to turn philosophy from scholastic arguments to illuminate and increase human good. Spinoza is excommunicated from the synagogue in 1656 as punishment for questioning Jewish and Christian beliefs. Isolation from the Jewish community is the result of his philosophic inquiry. Voltaire is exiled to England for three years where he writes the theoretical foundation for the French Revolution.

Kant is born in Konigsberg, Prussia. He tutors a short period of time in a nearby village but otherwise remains isolated to do his work and never leave his birth town. In 1813, Schopenhauer retires to the country to write his doctoral dissertation in philosophy. He later travels through France and Austria where he is struck by the chaos, poverty, unrest and misery of the towns he sees. He lives a simple isolated life with his dog. On his seventieth birthday he receives congratulations from all over the world. In 1860, he sits down for breakfast alone and is found dead by his landlady.

The first Russell dies during the war and the second, mystic communist Russell arises after the war. Russell's optimistic social philosophy leaves behind the rigidity of his pre-war period. Mathematics is no longer the sole criterion of his ideas. He visits Russia and China where he feels more at home with less mechanism and a slower lifestyle. He develops new perspectives and better understanding of a profounder culture as his philosophic systems loosen. Traveling the world convinces Russell it is too big for his mathematical formulae. William James travels with his younger brother Henry to study in France. William writes psychology like fiction. He returns to America to study medicine at Harvard in 1870. John Dewey is born in the East where he is educated. He travels west to teach philosophy in the Midwest.

# Style

## Perspective

Will Durant is an historian who writes the *Story of Philosophy* to provide a personal dimension to the study of philosophy. The author does not intend to write a complete and comprehensive history of philosophy. His stated goal is to humanize the knowledge of speculative thought around certain dominant philosophers. He writes about the greater philosophers as individuals who have human personalities and lifestyles that impact their philosophies. Durant also adds credibility to the environment in which a philosopher lives and speculates. For example, early Greece is a small island that has many city-states with separate politics and economies. The coastline of Greece is rough, dangerous and causes isolation of its population. If the coast were easier to navigate, fewer independent areas with their own thinkers may develop. Similarly, a post-evolution Europe ravaged by war gives the philosophers of that age, like Schopenhauer, a different point of view than the philosophers, like Voltaire, who lead up to the revolution.

Durant does not present his personal opinion about one or another school of philosophy or its significance to his personal philosophy. However, since his goal is not a complete history of all philosophical thought and philosophers, there is a selection of subjects that may reveal his perspective or bias. The author recognizes his bias against Scholasticism and Thomas Aquinas whom he references almost as incidental compared to the extensive treatment he gives Hegel, Voltaire and others. Presumably the background subsections that inform and bring the reader up to date between philosophic periods are adequate for the author to fulfill his stated mission. The front sections clearly state Durant's point of view and perspective in his selection of specific philosophers and philosophies.

## Tone

Durant writes as an objective historian who presents the facts of individual philosophers lives without qualitative commentary. His objective approach provides the reader with an opportunity to see the philosopher as he lived in the absence of the author's overriding commentary. Durant makes no comment about the lifestyle and location of philosophers. He prefers to present the philosopher and let the reader understand his philosophy as presented. He objectively presents the facts of a philosopher's life and the philosophic positions he takes with its actual consequences. The tone of the work is relatively lively considering the complexity and enormity of the subject content. For example, stories of Voltaire's success with his lady friends and life in Paris do not detract from Durant's description of the voluminous work Voltaire accomplishes. In contrast, Schopenhauer's unhappy romantic life is not imputed as the cause of his dreary philosophy of pessimism.



## Structure

The Story of Philosophy by Will Durant is a 704 page history of the subtitled Lives and Opinions of the Greater Philosophers. The work is divided into eleven chapters plus three front sections that include a Preface, To the Reader and Introduction: On the Uses of Philosophy. Following the last chapter are three sections that include a Conclusion, Glossary and Index. Each chapter ranges from three to ten major subsections. Some subsections have two to six subheadings. Nine chapters are titled under the name of an individual philosopher. Three of those chapters include in its title a movement or type of philosophy associated with a named philosopher. The last two chapters in the book are about contemporary philosophers and titles include the name of the continent where they lived. Each chapter, regardless of subtitles or subheadings, is an average of sixty pages long.

The chapter subtitles and subheadings provide information about the philosopher and subjects covered. The author begins each chapter with a subsection that has information about the period of time and significant facts that occurred from the prior chapter to the current subject chapter. For example, the first subsection in the first chapter is titled The Context of Plato, and the first subsection of the third chapter is titled From Aristotle to the Renaissance. Other first subsections in each chapter follow these examples. This format is critical to keeping the enormous amount of information over the approximately twenty-five centuries in order. Durant's subsection and subheading format are useful as guideposts or mile markers to the history of philosophy and his content. The Glossary and Index format further assists the reader in understanding where a philosopher, term or school fits within history and the text. For example Idealism is used in chapter six's title, defined in the glossary and listed in the index with page numbers indicating where the term is used. Durant's glossary and index give readers an ability to quickly check terms in context.



## Quotes

"At first this philosophy was physical; it looked out upon the material world and asked what was the final and irreducible constituent of things. The natural termination of this line of thought was the materialism of Democritus (460-360 B.C.)—'in reality there is nothing but atoms and space.' This was one of the mainstreams of Greek speculation; it passed underground for a time in Plato's day, but emerged in Epicurus (342-270 B.C.), and became a torrent of eloquence in Lucretius (98-55 B.C.)." Chapter 1, p. 3.

"Philosophy begins when one learns to doubt—particularly to doubt one's cherished beliefs, one's dogmas and one's axioms. Who knows how those cherished beliefs became certainties with us, and whether some secret wish did not furtively beget them, clothing desire in the dress of thought? There is no real philosophy until the mind turns round and examines itself. Gnothi seauton, said Socrates: Know thyself." Chapter 1, p. 7.

"The first great distinction of Aristotle is that almost without predecessors, almost entirely by his own hard thinking, he created a new science—Logic." Chapter 2, p.74.

"There is a heavy trace of this in the most characteristic and original of Aristotle's contributions to philosophy—the doctrine of the syllogism. A syllogism is a trio of propositions of which the third (the conclusion) follows from the conceded truth of the other two (the 'major' and 'minor' premisses). E.g., man is a rational animal; but Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is a rational animal. The mathematical reader will see at once that the structure of the syllogism resembles the proposition that two things equal to the same thing are equal to each other; if A is B, and C is A, then C is B. " Chapter 2, p. 78.

"Aristotle's theory of the soul begins with an interesting definition. The soul is the entire vital principle of any organism, the sum of its powers and processes. In plants the soul is merely a nutritive and reproductive power; in animals it is also a sensitive and locomotor power; in man it is as well the power of reason and thought." Chapter 2, p. 93.

"The secret of peace is not to make our achievements equal to our desires, but to lower our desires to the level of our achievements. 'If what you have seems insufficient to you,' said the Roman Stoic Seneca (d. 65 A.D.), 'then, though you possess the world, you will yet be miserable.'" Chapter 3, p. 126.

"The Church, supported in its earlier centuries by the emperors whose powers it gradually absorbed, grew rapidly in numbers, wealth, and range of influence. By the thirteenth century it owned one-third of the soil of Europe, and its coffers bulged with donations of rich and poor. For a thousand years it united with the magic of an unwavering creed, most of the peoples of a continent; never before or since was organization so widespread or so pacific. But this unity demanded, as the Church thought, a common faith exalted by supernatural sanctions beyond the changes and





corrosions of time; therefore dogma, definite and defined, was cast like a shell over the adolescent mind of medieval Europe. It was within this shell that Scholastic philosophy moved narrowly from faith to reason and back again, in a baffling circuit of uncriticized assumptions and pre-ordained conclusions. In the thirteenth century all Christendom was startled and stimulated by Arabic and Jewish translations of Aristotle; but the power of the Church was still adequate to secure, through Thomas Aquinas and others, the transmogrification of Aristotle into a medieval theologian." Chapter 3, p. 132.

"The object of philosophy, therefore, is to perceive unity in diversity, mind in matter, and matter in mind; to find the synthesis in which opposites and contradictions meet and merge; to rise to that highest knowledge of universal unity which is the intellectual equivalent of the love of God. Every one of these ideas became part of the intimate structure of Spinoza's thought." Chapter 4, p. 193.

"The mind of God,' as Spinoza conceives it, 'is all the mentality that is scattered over space and time, the diffused consciousness that animates the world.'" Chapter 4, p. 225.

"Books rule the world,' said Voltaire, 'or at least those nations in it which have a written language; the others do not count.'" Chapter 5, p. 261.

"Conscience is not the voice of God, but the fear of the police; it is the deposit left in us from the stream of prohibitions poured over the growing soul by parents and teachers and press. Morality must be founded not on theology but on sociology; the changing needs of society, and not any unchanging revelation or dogma, must determine the good." Chapter 5, p. 299.

"Idealism does not mean, as the man in the street thinks, that nothing exists outside the perceiving subject; but that a goodly part of every object is created by the forms of perception and understanding: we know the object as transformed into idea; what is before being so transformed we cannot know." Chapter 6, p. 354.

"The great achievement of Kant is to have shown, once for all, that the external world is known to us only as sensation; and that the mind is no mere helpless tabula rasa, the inactive victim of sensation, but a positive agent, selecting and reconstructing experience as experience arrives." Chapter 6, p. 373.

"The personal diagnosis can take its lead from Schopenhauer's admission that a man's happiness depends on what he is, rather than on external circumstance. Pessimism is an indictment of the pessimist. Given a diseased constitution and a neurotic mind, a life of empty leisure and gloomy ennui, and there emerges the proper physiology for Schopenhauer's philosophy. One must have leisure to be a pessimist; an active life almost always brings good spirits in body and in mind. Schopenhauer admires the serenity that comes of modest aims and a steady life, but he could hardly speak of these from personal experience." Chapter 7, p. 448.

"There was in Spencer an almost Schopenhauerian sense of the futility of human effort. At the end of his triumphant career he expressed his feeling that life was not worth





living. He had the philosopher's disease of seeing so far ahead that all the little pleasant shapes and colors of existence passed under his nose unseen." Chapter 8, p. 481.

"The decay of his repute was part of the English-Hegelian reaction against positivism; the revival of liberalism will raise him again to his place as the greatest English philosopher of his century. He gave to philosophy a new contact with things, and brought to it a realism which made German philosophy seem, beside it, weakly pale and timidly abstract." Chapter 8, p. 521.

"Nietzsche is not content with having created God in his own image; he must make himself immortal. After the superman comes Eternal Recurrence. All things will return, in precise detail, and an infinite number of times; even Nietzsche will return, and this Germany of blood and iron and sack-cloth and ashes, and all the travail of the human mind from ignorance to Zarathustra." Chapter 9, p. 545.

"Nietzsche denounces Plato, as he denounces all his creditors—no man is a hero to his debtor; but what is Nietzsche's philosophy but the ethics of Thrasymachus and Callicles, and the politics of Plato's Socrates?—With all his philology, Nietzsche never quite penetrated to the spirit of the Greeks; never learned the lesson that moderation and self-knowledge (as taught by the Delphic inscriptions and the greater philosophers) must bank, without extinguishing, the fires of passion and desire, that Apollo must limit Dionysus." Chapter 9, p. 575.

"Bergson soared to an early popularity because he had come to the defense of hopes which spring eternally in the human breast. When people found that they could believe in immortality and deity without losing the respect of philosophy, they were pleased and grateful; and Bergson's lecture-room became the salon of splendid ladies happy to have their heart's desires upheld with such learned eloquence." Chapter 10, p. 608.

"For Croce is an idealist, and recognizes no philosophy since Hegel's. All reality is idea; we know nothing except in the form it takes in our sensations and our thoughts. Hence all philosophy is reducible to logic; and truth is a perfect relationship in our ideas." Chapter 10, p. 612.

"Hence, in part, the patriotism of the people; they know that the price they pay for government is cheaper than the cost of chaos. Santayana wonders whether such patriotism does more harm than good; for it tends to attach the stigma of disloyalty to advocates of change." Chapter 11, p. 654.

"James believes that pluralistic theism affords us such a synthesis. He offers a finite God, not an Olympian thunderer sitting aloof on a cloud, 'but one helper, primus inter pares, in the midst of all the shapers of the great world's fate.'" Chapter 11, p. 672.



## Topics for Discussion

Identify, define and discuss Plato's concept of the sources of human behavior, including his belief about the location of their origin in the human body.

Describe the characteristics and provide a logical application of Aristotle's syllogism.

Compare and contrast the ideas and goals of Francis Bacon relative to his apparent hero worship of Plato.

Explain what Hegel means by his observation that 'To be a philosopher one must first be a Spinozist.'

Identify, describe and challenge or support the reasons Voltaire gives as to why only philosophers should write history.

Compare and contrast the common-man definition of idealism relative to the German philosophy's school of the term idealism.

Identify and describe five elements of Schopenhauer's personal life-style that would contribute to his philosophy of pessimism. What might he have done differently to produce a more balanced and realistic philosophy?

Compare and contrast elements in the lives of Spencer and Schopenhauer that may have caused each of them to develop a pessimistic opinion of reality.

Describe and discuss the significance of Nietzsche's Zarathustra as an expression of his philosophy.

Compare and contrast the main themes in the European philosophers Bergson, Croce and Russell, relative to their individual background, lifestyle and nationalities.

Compare and contrast the main themes in the American philosophers Santayana, James and Dewey, relative to their individual background, lifestyle and regional differences.

Compare and contrast any one European philosopher—Bergson, Croce or Russell—with any one American philosopher—Santayana, James or Dewey.