



Constructing a Life Philosophy: Opposing Viewpoints

Mary E. Williams (Editor)

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In this newly updated volume, thinkers such as M. Scott Peck, Niccolo Machiavelli, Paul Kurtz, and Pema Chodron offer readers an engaging overview of humanity's perennial investigation into the meaning of life. Chapters include: How Do Religions Give Life Meaning? What Motivates Moral Behavior? What Principles Should Guide Our Lives?

Constructing a Life Philosophy: Opposing Viewpoints Details

Date : Published May 20th 2005 by Greenhaven Press

ISBN : 9780737729283

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Format : Paperback 239 pages

Genre : Philosophy, Religion

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Bob says

This was an excellent read! Mary gets right to the point and does not inflate chapters with university jargon. My favorite chapter was about Paul Kurtz, which persuaded me to go on a witch hunt and find out more about him. He is coined "The Father of Secular Humanism"

<http://paulkurtz.net/>

Diego says

Constructing a Life Philosophy is part of the "Opposing Viewpoints" series. There is no real author to this book, but the book editor is Mark Ray Schmidt. There are no real characters or main ideas, but the book covers many controversial topics and the standpoints on them from various people in history. The book takes excerpts from texts from people like Plato and Machiavelli. It covers topics from humanism, religion, feminism, "life mapping," the meaning of life, moral behaviour and much more. The book provides many viewpoints on different aspects of life and makes sure to cover both sides of a viewpoint such as covering religion's link with morality, giving different viewpoints on the subject.

The editor does make this book adequately reach it's audience as it gives people many viewpoints, which helps construct their life philosophy as they view things from more than one point of view and can see counter-arguments to a certain claim. Some readers may feel lost of course as the book draws out a lot of thinking. The information provided may be overwhelming to the reader. One principle I was struck by was the mapping of life. "Our view of reality is like a map with which to negotiate the terrain of life. If the map is true and accurate, we will generally know where we are , and if we have decided where we want to go, we will generally know how to get there. If the map is false and inaccurate, we generally will be lost." What I took from this is that our life maps depend on our view of reality and if is true or false. A true view will lead to a steady life and path, but a false view will lead to being lost. Also I agreed with the point that we have to create our own life purpose.

I think the text provided in this book is very well presented. The manner in which one viewpoint is stated/explained, then the opposite viewpoint is explained is a very good way to present info as it gives the reader a wider POV. The book provides opinions from experts and cites information from hard to find sources. This makes it so the reader receives expert opinions to go along with their own opinions, which help to formulate the way they think of life and their stand on certain subjects. Overall, the book does very well in providing expert opinions on a wide range of controversial topics, so this is a great book, if that is what you seek.

The book provides no specific theme, but it consistently provides credible opinions on controversial topics and some of the hard questions in life. It doesn't force anything upon you, it just gives you information, and leaves you to take it in however you'd like. This is very effective because it keeps the reader thinking. The book appealed emotionally because it showed me things which I really never thought about and it widened my view and gave me extra information on some topics that I only had distorted opinions on.

Rich Berry says

I liked this book. It gave a brief but concise overview of the different faiths and beliefs.

Jennifer says

I highly enjoyed this book. I've always been interested in theology and philosophy, and this book serves as a really great basic primer to comparative religion. The information given was explained briefly at the start of each chapter, and then in a little more detail before each essay, and then more fully in the essay. My only complaints are that I would have liked a little bit more about some of the philosophical viewpoints presented, and that there wasn't much mention of morality in regard to Eastern Religions. Islam, also, seemed to get lumped in with Christianity and Judaism most of the time, which from what I understand of Islam, is vastly oversimplifying Islamic belief.

I liked the straightforward presentation of the material, and I liked the easier-to-read set up of the book, both in it's prose, and in the way it pared down some of the essays/excerpts in order to be as concise as possible. I also appreciated that there was a full bibliography, so that anyone who was interested in reading the full versions of the material presented could do so without too much trouble trying to track down books/magazines/articles.

I do have one quick note, and that is that this book is written for 13-19 year olds, not necessarily for adult readers, so some of the language can feel super-simplistic in the introductory prefaces especially, but in my opinion, this did not take away from the material presented.
