



ESSENTIALS OF PHILOSOPHY: The Basic Concepts of the World's Greatest Thinkers

James Mannion

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If you've always wanted to learn about philosophy but were too intimidated to get past the first word ending in "ism," Essentials of Philosophy provides simple explanations guaranteed to make philosophic ideas and concepts easy to understand. This entertaining book offers a broad overview of many diverse schools of thought - from antiquity up through the present-day. In plain English, author James Mannion explains all of the great philosophies - and even provides contemporary examples to put them in perspective. Interspersed are fascinating sidebars that offer helpful hints toward understanding complex concepts and little-known facts about the lives of great philosophers. Essentials of Philosophy delves into the minds of such fascinating philosophers as: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle Augustine and Aquinas Spinoza and Descartes Voltaire and Rousseau Mill and Nietzsche Russell and Sartre

ESSENTIALS OF PHILOSOPHY: The Basic Concepts of the World's Greatest Thinkers Details

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Terry says

I saw this book on the discount table and picked it up for my daughter who is interested in philosophy. Scanning the table of contents it seemed comprehensive, and it was only \$7, so I bought it. I wish I had kept my \$7.

With just a few paragraphs to cover each philosopher you would think the author would have tried to be concise. Instead this book reads like it was written by a high school student who needed an excess of slang, jokes, and cliches to fill a mandatory 5 paragraph essay about a subject without knowing anything about it.

For example, read the 5 paragraphs about Sir Thomas More and you'll get one simplistic sentence summarizing Utopia, a quote from Spock, and a mention of the 1966 movie A Man for All Seasons, but not a single quote, paraphrase or summary of anything that Sir Thomas More said or wrote.

If you want to learn anything about philosophy, don't bother with this book, not even for \$7.

Brent says

This is an excellent and easy introduction to philosophy. The book is not bogged down with heady philosophical jargon. It is best read for a review, or a cursory overview of philosophy. It does not delve into the works of philosophers, nor the finer points of their work.

Stephen Jacobi says

Philosophies should be taken with a grain of salt, and this is what this book does. It's easy to fall down the rabbit hole of just one philosophy, but you are really limiting yourself then.

Jedidiah Gainey says

This book gets kicked in the side a lot for some very notable and real flaws, including odd fixations on non-essential topics, bad grammar, a couple factual inconsistencies, and a slightly too liberal understanding of what constitutes "philosophy" (I'm an Occultist, so when I say that you know something's wrong). That all being conceded, I feel that this book accomplishes it's task admirably, in that people who know literally nothing about philosophy will come away feeling that they at least have a basic comprehension of the esprit of the thing, and are now aware and peripherally informed regarding the key players from throughout history. Worth the \$5-\$7.

Tammy says

Poorly written with an abundance of factual errors and negligence. I kept trying to lower my expectations and convince myself I simply wasn't the target reader, but it became pretty clear that the only optimal target reader was the writer himself.

Coverage of philosophers ranges from cultural background, biography, summary of beliefs, comparison with existing beliefs, major works, and reviews of major works for the author's favorite philosophers to one man who was only described as being very important in spite of not being famous until he became famous.

If you're interested in an easy-to-read introduction to philosophy, please look elsewhere.

William Schram says

It was an enjoyable introduction to philosophy, nothing incredible or amazing, but serviceable. It would make a good coffee table book.

David says

I enjoyed most of this book as a primer for learning a bit about philosophy throughout the world and prominent philosophers, their backgrounds, influences, and such. I was able to find a great many books to add to my eventual reading list as a result, and have a better grasp of different types of philosophical thought to boot. The author admittedly does try a bit too hard to be funny, which gets to be a bit grating on the nerves, and I thought the section on the main religions of the world wasn't entirely germane to what I thought the book was going to be about (specific philosophers), so I skimmed that area. I did, however, enjoy the addition of African theology, Eastern philosophy, and Native American philosophy, which are often neglected. This book does a good job of what it sets out to do, introduce one to the essentials of philosophy, to an layman such as myself.

Conner says

Concise and informative for the most part. It introduces and briefly explains a bunch of different philosophies, including other departments such as religion, new-age spirituality, psychology and anthropology. Where the book gets rather baffling is in the final chapter, in which the heretofore faceless author suddenly decides to show off his vast knowledge of the Star Trek universe & goes off into a lengthy digression about his favorite TV shows that he feels have philosophical relevance. The problem being that he gives this interpolation more page space than any of the philosophical explanations given in the book. Regardless, this is a very easy read and worthwhile to someone looking for a brief overview of philosophy.

Patrick Gruber says

The positives of this book are, it's a really good who's who list on philosophy. It can serve to refresh your memory of a lot of ideas and thinkers.

The negatives are, this author has a very low knowledge of a lot of philosophical ideas. The book is filled with constant bad attempts at humor. The author is constantly bringing up Christianity and describing it inaccurately. The book is filled with careless and sloppy writing and just plain untruthful assertions.

There are many many many books on philosophy that are much better than this one. I do not recommend it.

Jim Carty says

This book comes as advertised, "The Basic Concepts of the World's Greatest Thinkers", basic being the key word. It's more of a who's who in the arena of philosophy. I did enjoy the book and found it to be a good resource to help pick out some people I might want to study more (or not). For instance, I know now that I have no interest in reading Plato. Also, I don't understand why the chapter on Alcoholics Anonymous was in the book. Certainly a worthy topic, but it makes no sense to have it in this book.

John Sweeney says

As other reviewers noted, this is intended as merely an introduction to philosophy and its history, and should not be taken too seriously. That's all well and good, but I found a number of things in this text questionable enough to make me wonder whether I've been introduced to anything at all. Mannion's writing ranges from the inaccurate (he calls Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus -- a book that comes in at under 100 pages -- a "massive volume") to the bizarre (he includes almost as many pages on Alcoholics Anonymous as he does on Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle combined) to the offensive (the relationship between Star Trek and philosophy rates as many pages -- six -- as Native American religions and philosophies, which are all lumped together). I wanted to invest some time in reading philosophy this year, and thought a look at the big picture would help me keep all my readings in perspective. Unfortunately, this book is a blurry picture, at best. It is a mercifully quick read, though. So there's that.

Betty says

I wonder what took me so long. The book has been lying around he house for years. Now I have a rudimentary understanding of the major philosophies and religions of the world and if I forget them, the handy index in the back of he book covers the terms in layman's language. I've discovered I am probably a Humanist or a Deist.

Donna says

Reading this book was like visiting old friends.

Anthony says

Well written. It is an enjoyable read that keeps you going. I will say the AA chapter to me isn't really

philosophy. I found it intriguing but unnecessary in this book. I would recommend anyone interested in philosophy pick up this book. It's a quick concise book that will definitely give you the foundation you want out of a book.

Tim Gannon says

It was a \$7.99 book from Barnes and Noble and I loved it. It just gave a brief history of philosophy - the major names and types - it even discussed Eastern, African and Native American types briefly. Well worth the money - it let you learn the basics in a very enjoyable format - it even had a glossary and 'who's who of philosophy' at the end of the book - I think the author is actually a writer by trade and not a philosopher which was probably why the writing style was so enjoyable. I whole heartedly recommend it if the subject interests you.
