



A NEW HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY
Volume 3

THE RISE OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

ANTHONY KENNY

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Sir Anthony Kenny's engaging new multi-volume history of Western philosophy now advances into the modern era. *The Rise of Modern Philosophy* captures the fascinating story of the emergence, from the early sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, of the great ideas and intellectual systems that shaped modern thought.

Kenny introduces us to some of the world's most original and influential thinkers and helps us gain an understanding of their famous works. The great minds we meet include Rene Descartes, traditionally seen as the founder of modern philosophy; the great British philosophers Hobbes, Locke, and Hume; continental thinkers such as Spinoza, Liebniz, and Hegel; and the towering figure of Immanuel Kant, who perhaps more than any other made philosophy what it is today. Kenny first tells the story of modern philosophy chronologically: his lively, accessible narrative brings the philosophers to life and fills in the historical and intellectual background to their work. It is ideal as the first thing to read for someone new to this wonderfully creative period. Kenny then backtracks to look closely at each of the main areas of philosophical exploration in this period: knowledge and understanding; the nature of the physical universe; metaphysics (the most fundamental questions there are about existence); mind and soul; the nature and content of morality; political philosophy; and God.

The book also features many intriguing and beautiful illustrations which evoke the human and social side of philosophy. Anyone who is interested in the evolution of modern thought will find this a book a treasure.

The Rise of Modern Philosophy Details

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????? says

The most succulent volume in this series. I was hoping he'd get more into Hegelian metaphysics but I guess I'd have to read a more specialized book for that.

Peter McLoughlin says

This volume has the same concept format as the previous two volumes but I enjoyed it more than the volume on medieval philosophy because I find early modern philosophy way more interesting. Good luck to a reader not at all interested in this subject.

Lee Matibe says

The dates are consistently inconsistent. 1 moment it will say the person died in 1804 and then a sentence and a half later will say they physically visited another great person in 1860. This just screams no proof reading to the point where I don't know if I can trust the other information.

G0thamite says

Kenny's four volume series is a wonderful "middle-ground" text between Copleston's multi-volume work on the one hand, and Bertrand Russell's single-volume text on the other. He is able to distill the essential concepts of each philosopher without over-simplifying or trivializing their contribution. Each volume begins with a history of the period in the first few chapters followed by a thematic treatment of the major categories of philosophy: epistemology, axiology, political theory, metaphysics and so on. I like the approach. Kenny has given us a wonderfully approachable text for understanding what the major philosophers have taught, and he is able to tie the history of one philosopher to the next. A great introduction for undergraduates. You will do well to work through it.

Dardan says

Within 300 pages and without liberal use of excerpts drawn from primary texts, it's simply too difficult, if not impossible to draw an oversight of many philosophers, their time, while at the same time giving access and thereby true understanding of the work described.

Aneece says

An attempt to adopt Anglo-Saxon usage to logic led to this 16th Century construction:

Gaynsaying shewsayes are two shewsayes, the one a yeasaye and the other a naysaye, changing neither foreset, backset nor verbe.

Priceless.

Betawolf says

My concerns from the end of the second volume, that Kenney might struggle with the growing cast of notable historic philosophers, turn out to be unfounded. His history has here zoomed out to some degree, talking at times of general critical reception, but on the whole the story still hangs together. The change in material from the scholastics is extremely welcome, too, and makes the reading a lot more interesting. The arrival of modern political philosophy is particularly appreciated, as it is one of my favourite areas.

My favourite subject appears to be Hobbes, somewhat unexpectedly. I know of him almost entirely for *Leviathan*, and had never previously realised that he was the originator of the compatibilist solution to the free will debate, which has always seemed so clear a solution since I first heard it explained. Kenney covers his attitude on a few other topics, where he sounds shockingly modern. In fact, I found myself quite impressed by all the British philosophers of this period -- Hobbes, Locke and Hume -- in a way that a lot of the continentals left me cold. Possibly the best of the latter was Spinoza, whose metaphysics seems to be wrong, but in an appealingly consistent manner. Hume is also tortured, but Kenney makes the case that he was working in an impoverished background. I would much rather salute Hume than Kant, who so relied on him.

The early modern period seems to be the exciting bit of philosophy's history, with God no longer being threaded into every consideration, and some genuinely novel thoughts being developed. On this grounding, I am cautiously optimistic about the final volume.

Barnaby says

A solid, well-written discussion. I would appreciate more depth on some of the more obscure thinkers, but that can be had elsewhere in the specialist literature. This is intended to be an intelligent, lucid overview and it succeeds. I'd suggest this particularly to anyone investigating seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Europe as the perfect background text on the philosophical climate.
