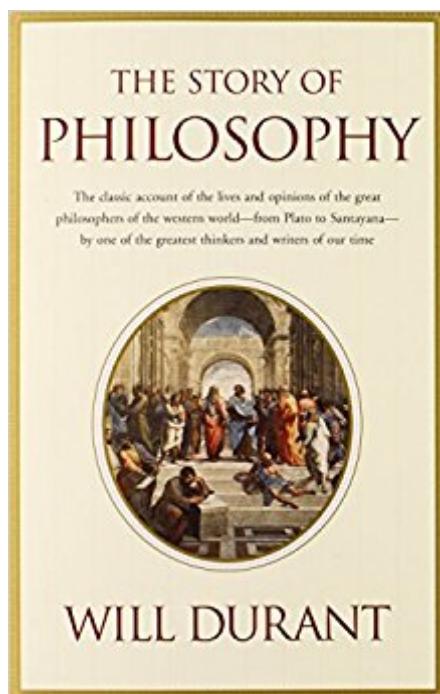


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The Story Of Philosophy (Touchstone Books) (Touchstone Books (Paperback))



Synopsis

A brilliant and concise account of the lives and ideas of the great philosophers—Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Spinoza, Voltaire, Kant, Schopenhauer, Spencer, Nietzsche, Bergson, Croce, Russell, Santayana, James, and Dewey—The Story of Philosophy is one of the great books of our time. Few write for the non-specialist as well as Will Durant, and this book is a splendid example of his eminently readable scholarship. Durant's insight and wit never cease to dazzle; The Story of Philosophy is a key book for any reader who wishes to survey the history and development of philosophical ideas in the Western world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Easily the most engaging writer of Western intellectual history in the English language, Will Durant breathes life into philosophers and their ideas. He is colorful, witty, and above all, informative. Beginning with Socrates and ending with American philosopher John Dewey, Durant summarizes the lives and influence of philosophy's greatest thinkers, painting them with humanity and adding a few of his own wise platitudes. Seventy-some years after its first printing, The Story of Philosophy still stands as one of the best of its kind.

The New York Times A delight.

I read this book when I was 18 and understood only maybe 25%, but it became a huge influence on my life. Now I have just re-read it at age 61, and figure I understood about 80% of it, and got an even bigger thrill from it this time around. Like religion or science or anything else, there is no need to completely understand philosophy in order to find pleasure in it. Will Durant is an amazing writer who brings joy and understanding to the history of some of the world's greatest minds, and how they painted God, human nature, politics and wisdom in general.

I read this when I was in high school, so it was my introduction to philosophy. I didn't understand much of it at the time, but stuck with philosophy and history (where Durant was also a major figure for me) in college and went on to teach both subjects. I bought this as a present for a young friend just entering high school and have told him it presents many windows. They will be dark for him now, but gradually he will begin to see wonderful things through some of them.

There are some works that last. Durant's "The Story of Philosophy" is one of those books. The material is timeless and timely, as the same philosophical moments that began with key figures return with new authors and new names, but the content does not vary that much. Over 3 years, Will Durant did the research for this book, and the reader's reward is a full table with tempting dessert. The dessert is one understands the present to a greater extent, so that the current moves and moods are not bewildering but one can say, "I recall that so-and-so said something like that "The alert reader will be able to make sense of this 21st century puzzle of life, ethics, history, philosophy, and world-views. If I were to teach philosophy in college, I would select this book for an introduction and spend time in small groups and a book of readings in philosophy. This idea would work in lay groups in churches also.

This book was originally published in 1929 under the title "The Mansions of Philosophy." The title was changed for the 1953 republication because the publishers were uncertain as to whether the average reader would be familiar with the biblical quote "In my Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:2). The author studied for the priesthood but left the seminary after three years to pursue unbiased philosophy and history. However, Durant never lost his love and respect for the humanism he saw in Christ, and this is why Durant's historical and philosophical works are always presented in light of what is most admirable about human nature -- or at least, how we can always strive for what is best in us.

This is the best overview/summary on the broad topic of "philosophy" that you are going to find. In addition to being a great reference book, it's an enjoyable read. Will Durant and his wife were great at illustrating with words. Any time I want to study a philosopher or idea I go to the Durants first and read their research. You can easily read this book straight through, but you can also jump around. You'll find yourself making lots of bookmarks, notes and highlights that you will refer back to. I have the mass produced paper back, the audiobook and now the Kindle version of this title. The audiobook is well read and the narrator has a clear voice and properly emphasizes where he should. I always recommend this book to anyone looking for something interesting to read.

If you want to have an idea when partaking in upper brow philosophical conversation, this is a convenient first stop covering all the classic bases. Very informative and easy to follow reading. Definitely not the most technical book but surprisingly, more than 70 years after its first edition this book remains useful and engaging. For the amateur philosopher I would add Bertrand Russell's history of the Western philosophy and for the uber dedicated, considering enrolling in a degree in philosophy perhaps the New History of the Western Philosophy of Prof Anthony Kenny.

An acknowledged classic from Will and Ariel Durant. Several philosophers have recommended (1) reading this history and then (2) reading The History of Western Philosophy by Bertrand Russell. The total being more than the sum of the parts. Why should you take time to study Philosophy in 2014? Perhaps to become familiar with Voltaire and his timeless wisdom. "If we believe absurdities, we will commit atrocities" ~ Voltaire. Donald Rumsfeld, anyone? ;-)

I bought and listened to this as an audiobook, and I simply loved it. So much so that I bought a paper copy for my library so that I could refer back to it and so that when my kids are old enough I can recommend it to them. I wish I had read this book for a college course, because I would have loved to have been able to spend hours discussing it with other people. Even without all of that, I found it to be fascinating in explaining details about the lives of the philosophers and the details of the differences between their ideas. This is the kind of book you can read over and over again and keep learning more from it. I'll leave more nuanced reviews to philosophy experts, but if you want to survey philosophy over time in one digestible book, I can't imagine you could do any better than this one.

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