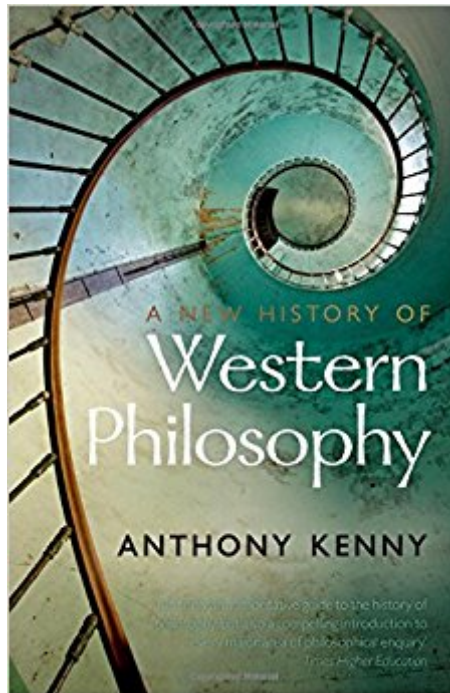




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# A New History Of Western Philosophy



## Synopsis

The individual volumes of Sir Anthony Kenny's acclaimed History of Western Philosophy have been hailed as "wonderful authoritative hugely rewarding" (Times Higher Education Supplement) and "genial and highly accessible" (London Review of Books). Now these four splendid books have been combined into one magnificent volume, providing a continuous sweeping account of the great thought of the Western world. Here readers will find not only an authoritative guide to the history of philosophy, but also a compelling introduction to every major area of philosophical inquiry. Kenny tells the story of philosophy chronologically, his lively narrative bringing the great philosophers to life and filling in the historical and intellectual background to their work. Kenny also looks closely at each of the main areas of philosophical exploration: knowledge and understanding; science; metaphysics; mind and soul; the nature and content of morality; political philosophy; and God. A New History of Western Philosophy is a stimulating chronicle of the intellectual development of Western civilization, allowing readers to trace the birth and growth of philosophy from antiquity to the present day.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Kenny's authoritative work, compiling four volumes, is the finest single-author history of Western philosophy since Frederick Copleston- a Herculean task executed with erudition and entertainment. From the dream of the ancient Greeks to the deconstruction of postmodernists, he accessibly treats

the major branches of philosophy: ethics, politics, religion, epistemology, language, metaphysics, aesthetics, and logic. --Christopher, Benson --First Things

Sir Anthony Kenny is one of Britain's most distinguished academic figures. He has been Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Master of Balliol College, Chairman of the Board of the British Library, and President of the British Academy. He has published more than forty books on philosophy and history.

I have the highest regard for this history, or I would not have both hardcover and Kindle versions of it. These notes concern the transition to the Kindle format, as experienced on the original Paperwhite. Navigation is mostly excellent, as it should be for a work which will be used as a work of reference as well as one of which substantial portions will be read from beginning to end: there is a table of contents with the major divisions of each of the Four Parts (originally published separately), and at the start of each Part there is its own more detailed contents section. Cross-references and footnotes are hyperlinked. The only improvement to navigation would be if the page references in the Index were hyperlinked too. The smaller typeface used in my printed volumes for whole paragraphs of quotation is missing, except in Part Four. Thankfully, in the other Parts there is extra white space before and (usually) after the quoted passage. This white space, plus the almost inevitable reference to the cited work, ensures that in practice one can work out where the quotation ends. However, the conventional layout is there for a reason, and we should not have to deduce where a quotation begins and ends. Some "tabular" textual layouts (which occur infrequently) are not really satisfactory. So two columns of text (e.g. parallel syllogisms, or the square showing "Intellect, Will, Sensation, Desire" at about location 4670) get run together in a way that is frankly meaningless. There are some strange and arbitrary changes to the printed text: at one point the transliteration of the Greek for "the now" (an italicised "to nun") loses the italics for the article "to". At another, on motion, there are apostrophes representing the primes in  $p'$  and  $p''$ , which is not pretty but suffices. Then suddenly they disappear and what should read  $\tilde{A} \hat{A} \ll p' \text{ to } p'' \tilde{A} \hat{A}$  now reads on the Kindle  $\tilde{A} \hat{A} \ll p \text{ to } p \tilde{A} \hat{A}$ . Again, for some reason on the Kindle a space is introduced into the term "not- $p$ " so that it becomes "not - $p$ " and the reader stumbles briefly over whether the hyphen represents the  $\tilde{A} \hat{A} \neg$  sign for negation (location about 3138). There are no illustrations in the Kindle version. The map, as usual on my Paperwhite, is useless. The page numbers are continuous, doubtless representing those of the one-volume edition of the work rather than of the separately published volumes. The frequent headings (hyperlinked as already

mentioned), rather than the page numbers, allow one quite easily to relate the Kindle text to one of the printed editions. Greek letters get very uneven treatment in the Kindle version: sometimes a proper, scalable Greek letter is used; sometimes a Roman letter equivalent based on the letter's appearance (e.g. Zeta and Zed/Zee); sometimes a Roman letter equivalent based on the letter's position in the respective alphabets (e.g. Zeta and F); and sometimes a non-scalable graphic. (A lower-case Greek Phi given the latter treatment looks rather like a smudge on the screen.) Examples follow - all from Volume One, where there are frequent references to Aristotle's "Metaphysics": Book Delta of the "Metaphysics" is referred to in the print version using the Greek capital letter (Δ), but in the Kindle it appears as book "D". You would expect Book Zeta to cause no problems (capital Zeta (Ζ) and the modern equivalent (Z) being effectively identical) - but sometimes it becomes the capital letter F. In "Aristotle on Science and Illusion", references to book Gamma use a proper Greek letter (Γ) (capital Gamma). In "Essence and Quiddity", references to Book Zeta are to Book F (e.g. location 4112 approx); those to Delta start out by being to D, which then revert to a genuine scalable character (Δ) for the reference to 7.1017a22. In "Being and Existence", references to book Delta are given as if to book D, and references to book Zeta are to book F. Beta becomes B, and Eta correctly looks like our H. Book Gamma is referred to with mini-picture (Γ) (capital Gamma) (location 4286 approx). There is a Kindle typo in the Bibliography for Aristotle (Chapter 2), where the edition of what is called "Metaphysics M and H" should refer to "Metaphysics M and N". Readers wanting to follow up references to Aristotle will have to be guided by prior knowledge or by the print edition. As noticed already, footnotes are hyperlinked. The question is whether the links are accurate. A few soundings suggest that mostly they take you perfectly to the required place. In one place (Part 4, Ch 8, n 1) the print version directs you, correctly, to some sections on medieval ethics, while the Kindle hyperlink takes you to one section earlier (to Abelard rather than Aquinas); in another, (Part 4, Ch 11, n 4), the print version directs you to the starting page of the section on "Aristotle's Political Theory", while the Kindle takes you to a more precise location within that section, a few physical pages on. Reading these pages on the Kindle is generally a delight, but it would be good to see the noticed imperfections corrected.

This is a brilliantly written book that successfully balances the historical and philosophical detail of western thought since the early Greeks. While I have not read Russell's acclaimed title, I can confidently say that this history is exactly what I needed as an average reader of philosophy with a desire to expand my knowledge of the discipline and achieve a broader understanding of the

contributions of its major figures and movements. As others have pointed out, this history is particularly unique for its acknowledgement of thinkers that are traditionally excluded from histories of philosophy but which have influenced the development of philosophy in lasting and compelling ways. Additionally, and most surprisingly, Sir Kenny's history remains remarkably accessible and enjoyable throughout without sacrificing clarity and precision. Truly a unique contribution and one that will likely grow in acclaim as years go on.

This is a wonderful overview of the whole of Western Philosophy written by an excellent if somewhat unsung philosopher and historian, Anthony Kenny. Mr. Kenny's approach of first giving the philosopher's history and then an in-depth study of the philosophical work they covered, works very well for spot reference, though I couldn't help reading it from cover to cover. The book really rounded out my understanding of this nebulous topic's growth and specialization through the centuries. I highly recommend.

From the reviews of its individual volumes, there's little I can add here. The biggest complaints are Kenny's cutoff date of 1975 (30 years to the first volume's publication), that "he didn't give enough pages to Philosopher X!," and that he downplayed the contributions of 20th century Continental philosophers. It's easy to think that our favorite (and recent or current) philosopher is not just a fad but so important that his greatness just isn't appreciated! Yet this is the same complaint with EVERY history of philosophy. Yes, with every single one. Better it would be to have added a fifth volume for 20th century philosophy. At least Kenny recognizes that many philosophies do not survive far beyond their own day and looking back, seem faddish. Thus his short-shrift of postmodernism (Have we really learned much beyond the original writings up to 1981?). Kenny does something rare, which is to credit the influence that Marx, Darwin, and Freud had on philosophy, even though they rarely can be counted as philosophers. Intended as an introductory undergraduate text, it's really good as such. Don't ask it to be comprehensive and don't ask Kenny to give your favorite philosopher more pages than another in the same period. As is, it's pretty fantastic and a welcome history.

I have over the years read several histories of Western Philosophy, and this is the best of the lot. Professor Kenny gives the reader a thorough, comprehensive, and readable account of philosophy from the ancient Greeks to the present, introducing the reader to the ideas of major thinkers and the themes that have preoccupied philosophers over time in the areas of metaphysics, epistemology,

logic, ethics, politics, religion, and aesthetics.

The hardcover version of the book has a type of binding which is called "perfect binding"- basically they dip the ends of the pages in some glue and call it good, in contrast to a more durable type of binding which actually sews the pages together. Bought the book and after around 10 uses the front pages started falling out. Content-wise it is quite good.

Very comprehensive

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