

Preface

What's new here? This edition incorporates several modifications we hope you will find well chosen, useful, or apt; and we shall list them shortly. Even with the changes, the book is the straightforward, un gimmicky historical introduction to philosophy it has always been, an introduction that differs from many historical texts in containing separate historical overviews of the major branches of philosophy. Our presentation—a middle road between the historical approach and the “problems” approach—helps readers keep similar concepts together and helps instructors avoid leaving an impression that philosophy is a parade of unconnected speculations.

Philosophy—Powerful Ideas

We concluded years ago that most people like philosophy if they understand it and that most understand it if it isn't presented to them in exhausting prose. In this text we strive above all else to make philosophy understandable while not oversimplifying.

We also concluded years ago that some people just aren't moved by the subject. Worse, we learned that among those who aren't are a few who are sane, intelligent, well informed, and reasonable and who generally have sound ideas about the world, vote for the right people, and are even worth having as friends. Philosophy is just not for everyone, and no text and no instructor can make it so.

So we do not expect that every student, or even every bright student, who comes in contact with philosophy will love the field. But we do hope that every student who has had an introductory course in philosophy will learn that philosophy is more than inconsequential mental flexing. Philosophy contains powerful ideas, and it affects the lives of real people. Consequently, it must be handled with due care. The text makes this point clear.

Philosophy: A Worldwide Search for Wisdom and Understanding

Until the middle of the twentieth century, most philosophers and historians of ideas in American and European universities thought philosophical reflection occurred only within the tradition of disciplined discourse that began with the ancient Greeks and has continued into the present. This conception of philosophy has been changing, however, first through the interest in Eastern thought, especially Zen Buddhism, in the fifties, then through the increasingly widespread publication of high-quality translations and commentaries of texts from outside the Western tradition in the following decades. Of course, the availability of such texts does not mean that unfamiliar ideas will receive a careful hearing or even that they will receive any hearing at all.

Among the most challenging threads of the worldwide philosophical conversation is what has come to be known in recent years as postcolonial thought. The lines defining this way of thinking are not always easy to draw—but the same could be said for existentialism, phenomenology, and a number of other schools of thought in philosophy. In any event, in many cultures and subcultures around the world, thinkers are asking searching questions about methodology and fundamental beliefs that are intended to have practical, political consequences. Because these thinkers frequently intend their work to be revolutionary, their ideas run a higher-than-usual risk of being lost to philosophy's traditional venues. We include in this book a small sample from such writers.

Women in the History of Philosophy

Histories of philosophy make scant mention of women philosophers prior to the twentieth century. For a long time it was assumed that lack of mention was due to lack of influential women philosophers. Scholarship such as that by Mary Ellen Waithe (*A History of Women Philosophers*) suggests that women have been more important in the history of philosophy than is often assumed. To date we lack full-length translation and modern editions of the works of many women philosophers. Until this situation changes, Waithe argues, it is difficult to reconstruct the history of the discipline with accuracy.

This text acknowledges the contributions of at least some women to the history of philosophy. We have included women philosophers throughout the text in their historical context, and we also offer a chapter on feminist philosophy.

Features

Among what we think are the nicer attributes of this book are these:

- Separate histories of metaphysics and epistemology, moral and political philosophy, and the philosophy of religion

- Chapters on postmodernism and multiculturalism
- A section titled “Other Voices” which contains chapters on Eastern Philosophy, feminist philosophy, the postmodern critique, and postcolonial philosophy
- Recognition of specific contributions of women to philosophy
- A generous supply of original readings that don’t overwhelm beginning students with difficulty
- Boxes highlighting important concepts and principles and distinctions or containing interesting anecdotes or historical asides
- Biographical profiles of many of the great philosophers
- End-of-chapter checklists of key philosophers and concepts, with mini-summaries of the philosophers’ leading ideas
- End-of-chapter questions for review and reflection, and lists of additional sources
- A pronunciation guide to the names of philosophers
- A brief subsection on American Constitutional theory
- Glossary/index that defines important concepts on the spot
- Teachable four-part organization: (1) Metaphysics and Epistemology (2) Moral and Political Philosophy (3) Philosophy of Religion (4) Other Voices
- A section on arguments and fallacies

New Features and Changes for the Fifth Edition

- A revised first chapter—our new invitation to readers to study philosophy
- Separate chapters on Plato and Aristotle, with expanded coverage of both philosophers
- Clearer treatment of Kant’s epistemology
- An enhanced treatment of analytic philosophy that pays attention to the philosophy of language and the philosophy of science
- Clearer explanation of moral skepticism and moral relativism
- Expanded coverage of Nietzsche
- A separate chapter on feminist philosophy, with new reading selections from Sandra Harding and Marielouise Janssen-Jurreit
- An up-to-the minute discussion of the creationism/evolutionism debate
- Updated bibliographic references

We have also reduced the number of boxes by incorporating boxed material into the text (or leaving it out). In addition, so that readers may understand how boxes relate to the text and when it might make sense to read them, we give in-text references to the remaining boxes.

The Teaching Package

Instructor's Manual A detailed Instructor's Manual by Dan Barnett, California State University, Chico, contains point-by-point chapter summaries, lists of boxes, lists of reading selections (with brief descriptions of contents), titles of philosophers' main works, lecture ideas relating to questions asked at ends of chapters, and a complete bank of objective test questions.

Student Study Guide A student Study Guide by Kenneth Long, Indiana University–Purdue University at Fort Wayne, includes for each chapter key themes, key objectives, detailed chapter summaries, and practice exams containing matching, true–false, and multiple choice questions. Short answer questions with suggested answers for each chapter encourage students to review the material in writing and to assess what they have learned. Each chapter concludes with a special project. The study guide also gives students useful study tips, with special emphasis on the skills needed to study philosophy.

Online Learning Center New to this edition is the Online Learning Center: www.mhhe.com/powerofideas5 This free on-line learning tool includes Instructor's Manual in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint slides for each chapter, chapter outlines, multiple choice and true/false quizzes (autograded), links to relevant Web sites, and an interactive flashcard glossary for each chapter.

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Finally, we want to thank our fine development editor, Barbara Armentrout, and excellent copy editor, Margaret Moore. In all honesty, we think the most substantial improvements to this edition are due to their efforts. Incidentally, it took some effort by both editors to get us to refer to the twentieth century in the past tense. To us, “the last century” means Sherlock Holmes, balloon flights, the Civil War—not Elizabeth Anscombe or W. V. O. Quine, for heaven’s sake. We are adjusting.

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