



From Descartes to Wittgenstein: A short history of modern philosophy

Roger Scruton

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This rich survey attempts to make the history of modern philosophy cogent and intelligible to the common reader. It sets out to clarify the principal metaphysical, ethical and political attitudes of the post-medieval philosophers while maintaining a contemporary points of view on each of the major figures discussed. An introductory section discusses the nature of philosophy, as contrasted with, and closely related to, science and theology. It locates the distinguishing features of philosophical thought in abstraction and concern for truth, moving on from this broad description to a detailed consideration of points of view within the philosophical tradition. The origins of philosophy are found in scholastic thought, and traced further back to Plato and Aristotle. "From Descartes to Wittgenstein" affirms a distinction between history of philosophy and history of ideas. It argues that the great philosophers were wrestling with problems of perennial concern, and that the true history of philosophy requires us to see this. The issues discussed by Descartes & his successors are not closed, and modern thinkers can only benefit from acquaintance with their methods of argument. No one contemporary school predominates in this history: Spinoza, Hegel, and Sartre are treated as fairly as Locke, Hume, and Wittgenstein. The book will be valued by students of philosophy in need of an unbiased modern perspective.



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