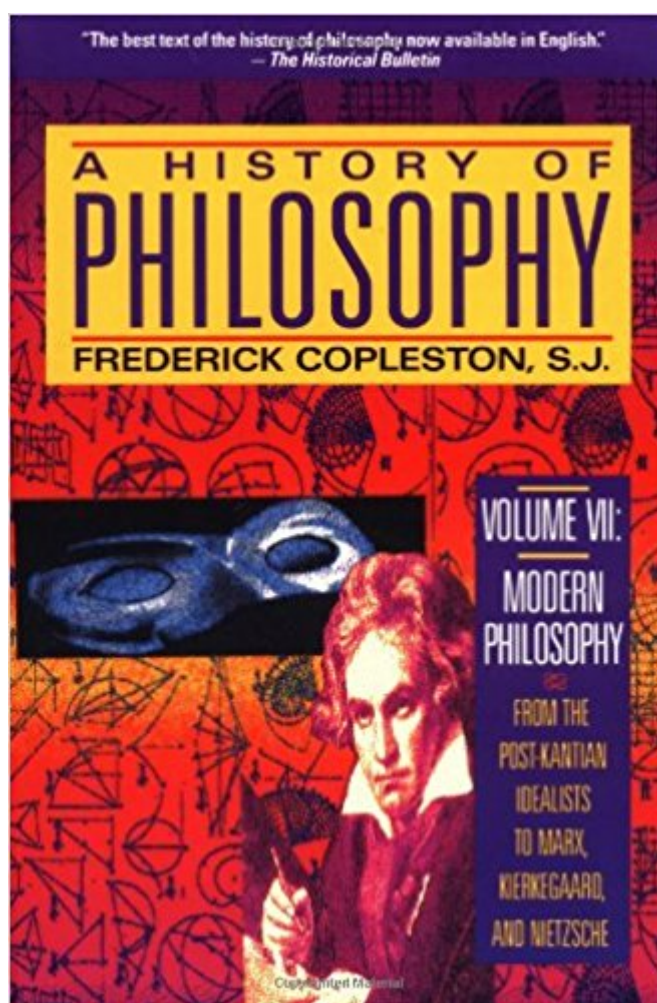


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A History Of Philosophy, Vol. 7: Modern Philosophy - From The Post-Kantian Idealists To Marx, Kierkegaard, And Nietzsche



Synopsis

Conceived originally as a serious presentation of the development of philosophy for Catholic seminary students, Frederick Copleston's nine-volume *A History Of Philosophy* has journeyed far beyond the modest purpose of its author to universal acclaim as the best history of philosophy in English. Copleston, an Oxford Jesuit of immense erudition who once tangled with A. J. Ayer in a fabled debate about the existence of God and the possibility of metaphysics, knew that seminary students were fed a woefully inadequate diet of theses and proofs, and that their familiarity with most of history's great thinkers was reduced to simplistic caricatures. Copleston set out to redress the wrong by writing a complete history of Western philosophy, one crackling with incident and intellectual excitement -- and one that gives full place to each thinker, presenting his thought in a beautifully rounded manner and showing his links to those who went before and to those who came after him. The result of Copleston's prodigious labors is a history of philosophy that is unlikely ever to be surpassed. *Thought* magazine summed up the general agreement among scholars and students alike when it reviewed Copleston's *A History of Philosophy* as "broad-minded and objective, comprehensive and scholarly, unified and well proportioned... We cannot recommend [it] too highly."

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Customer Reviews

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I first heard of this series about a year ago when I called one of our Florida Catholic seminaries to learn what texts they used for their course in St. Thomas Aquinas. I purchased Volume II on Medieval Philosophy as recommended and decided also to buy Volume I on Ancient Greek Philosophy. Due to the author Frederick Copleston's wide yet deep knowledge and comprehensive, fair-minded treatment of each philosopher, I began to trust his views, and I decided to read the entire series, and am now on Volume IX. Volume 7 covers the period after Kant, up through Marx, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. The coverage of Hegel is particularly splendid. I'm gaining a much better sense than I had before of persons, ideas, and trends, and am also building my reading list of individual philosophers. Highly recommended for the serious student.

Copleston's history is a good introduction to the main currents of philosophy. It contains more solid information and less fluff than Will Durant's books. Copleston covers almost every philosopher that a good student would need to know, and does so accurately. My only criticism is that he sometimes inserts a few sentences of vague generalizations into an otherwise content-rich chapter. Some editor should have removed those prior to publication. Nonetheless, an excellent book!

love it

great

My Credentials:I'm merely a student of philosophy for the time being, not a teacher, so I'm no scholar. I have, however, read Copleston through the seventh volume, so I'm certainly a veteran of his History; I know its strengths and weaknesses.Review:The volume does a wonderful job of delineating the complex systems of metaphysical idealism, which I was somewhat intimated to approach. Copleston is esoterically extensive in his consideration of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.

Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard are well-treated. The volume is also strong in its covering of minor thinkers (as are ALL Copleston volumes). The volume is utterly pathetic in its examination of the twentieth-century German titans: Husserl and Heidegger. I would also argue that it is weak in its examination of Nietzsche, but I may be over estimating this philosopher's position in history.

I've owned my copy of Frederick Copleston's "History of Philosophy" for more than four decades. During this time, as a sometimes fulltime and sometimes adjunct college-level philosopher teacher, I have referred to it more than to any other survey of the history of philosophy. Not only is it complete, but it is also well balanced. Copleston, who was a Jesuit, does an excellent job of not allowing his own perspective to stand in the way of an objective description of the views of the philosophers he discusses. What is true of the other volumes is true of Volume 7, which covers the Continental philosophy of the nineteenth century. Beginning with Fichte, Copleston traces the development of Absolute Idealism through Schelling to Hegel. Along the way he also devotes an entire chapter to Schleiermacher. Not surprisingly, Hegel's philosophy is covered in considerable detail, and Copleston does a great job of making sense out of the thought of a most difficult and complex thinker. The next part of Volume 7 is devoted to an analysis of the thought of the critics of German Idealism. In addition to two chapters on Arthur Schopenhauer and one on Søren Kierkegaard, Copleston also discusses the ideas of some of the lesser lights of this reaction, such as Christian Weiss, Jakob Fries, and Immanuel Fichte (the son of Johann Fichte). The last part of this work includes a discussion of non-dialectical materialism, the neo-Kantian movement, and the philosophy of Nietzsche. A study of this volume will certainly reward the serious student of philosophy with a greater understanding of the period and provides a great background for study of the writings of these philosophers.

The post Kantian metaphysical idealists are perhaps impossible to understand if you are a realist like me (trained in the 50's by the Jesuits and a former fighter pilot). Working on notes for a book I realized that modern philosophy from Descartes on is simply an exercise in "beings of reason" (entia rationis in Latin) creations or products of the mind alone and strictly mind dependent, inspired perhaps by other philosophers or traditional philosophy but NOT founded on the only reality which is the the order of Creation, real beings created and UNCREATED, substance, accident, cause etc.; the real contingency of created things lead with inevitable logic to the Creator, a non contingent being whose essence is to exist.

This is the seventh volume of Frederick Copleston's classic "History of Philosophy". It covers what is easily the golden age of philosophy - or at least German philosophy. Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer are treated at length (Copleston is surprisingly positive towards Hegel). There are also chapters on Marx and Engels, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and the Neo-Kantian movement, plus some lesser known thinkers. When reading Copleston's overview, I somehow got the feeling that I finally understood Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, three thinkers notoriously difficult to "grok". An illusion? Perhaps, but I like to remain in that state for a while... Besides, it says something about Copleston's ability as a communicator. Incidentally, Kant is treated already in the sixth volume. But then, his philosophy is pure cant, anyway! Five stars.

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