



By

Mark McGee

A History of Western Philosophy From the Pre-Socratics to Postmodernism by C. Stephen Evans (IVP Academics, 2018) is an excellent introductory textbook for serious Christian apologists. I say serious because the book covers more than 2,500 years of philosophy in only 600 pages.

The author wrote that it took him seven years to write this book and it may take you many days or even weeks to read and absorb the information presented. However, I believe your time reading *A History of Western Philosophy* will be repaid in gaining a deeper understanding the world of Ancient Greece and Rome and why people believed what they believed during the early years of the Christian church, along with what people believe today in many parts of our world.

C. Stephen Evans is University Professor of Philosophy and the Humanities at Baylor University. Evans also taught philosophy at Calvin College, St. Olaf College, and Wheaton College. Evans' previous books include *Philosophy of Religion* (2009), *Kierkegaard: An Introduction* (2009), *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments* (2012), *God and Moral Obligation* (2014), and *Why Christian Faith Still Makes Sense* (2015).

Evans does a good job at the beginning of the book answering the question “what is ‘western’ philosophy.” He also looks at questions about the nature of philosophy and the history of philosophy.

“Philosophy is a quest for wisdom, and wisdom is, at least in part, practical. A wise person would be a person who understands what it is to be a human being and how human life should be lived. That in turn requires an understanding of the world in which humans live. The person who is looking for the right things can see these concerns as present in the whole history of Western philosophy, but it is easier to do if one’s conception of philosophy is shaped by the early Greeks, in whom the quest for wisdom as including an understanding of the good life stands out so vividly.” p 5

Evans points out in his introduction about philosophy that it’s important to know he is a Christian believer.

“Part of my interest in philosophy stems from a conviction that philosophy is a valuable tool for a Christian who wants a deeper understanding of his or her faith, and who wants a deeper understanding of the Western world that has been partly shaped by philosophy. The history of Western philosophy is particularly interesting for a Christian because that history often intersects with the history of theology and the history of various religions, especially the three Abrahamic faiths: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.” p 10

This list of contents from *A History of Western Philosophy* is a good way to see how Dr. Evans covered the topic. I highly recommend Dr. Evans' new book to every Christian apologist.

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Publisher's Notes

“Plato. Aristotle. Augustine. Hume. Kant. Hegel.

These names and the philosophies associated with them ring through the minds of every student and scholar of philosophy. And in their search for knowledge, every student of philosophy needs to know the history of the philosophical discourse such giants have bequeathed us.

Noted philosopher C. Stephen Evans brings his expertise to this daunting task as he surveys the history of Western philosophy, from the Pre-Socratics to Nietzsche and postmodernism—and every major figure and movement in between.”

Reviews

“Few textbook writers have a long and distinguished record of first-rank scholarship, but this one does. Even fewer have been able to write successfully for disciplinary specialists, interested intellectuals, and first-time inquirers, but this one has. Almost none of these can offer the fruit of a lifetime’s reflection on philosophy from an informed and discerning Christian viewpoint, but this one can. Steve Evans’s new survey is a rare gift, as he himself is, and I trust this book will gain the wide reading it deserves.” John G. Stackhouse Jr., Samuel J. Mikolaski professor of religious studies, Crandall University, Moncton, Canada

“We have here an overview of western philosophy from the pre-Socratic philosophers of ancient Greece to the twentieth century. It offers a summary of the basic teachings of the major thinkers we have come to call philosophers that is comprehensive, succinct, lucid, and evenhanded. In addition there are occasional reflections on the significance of the material for Christian thought. Combined with the appropriate primary source readings, this volume will be a very useful textbook for a variety of college level courses.” Merold Westphal, distinguished professor of philosophy emeritus, Fordham University

*“When a world-class Christian philosopher writes on the history of Western philosophy, one can expect a first-rate work that illuminates and enriches—and that is just what we find here. Evans’s book effectively distills key philosophical figures and their ideas, considering both their historical context and their lasting influence. What we have in this volume is a marvelous resource that engages key thinkers and philosophical concepts judiciously, insightfully, and Christianly.” Paul Copan, the Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics, Palm Beach Atlantic University, author of *A Little Book for New Philosophers**

*“Evans’s *A History of Western Philosophy* is a superb instance of its kind, skillfully combining breadth of coverage with insightful philosophical analysis of the ideas and arguments covered. It is accessible enough to be helpful to those who are new to philosophy, yet comprehensive and accurate enough to offer something to graduate students and professors. This book would be especially suitable as the sole secondary text assigned in an introductory philosophy course or in more advanced undergraduate courses in the history of philosophy. It would also be a great resource for clergy and laypeople who are interested in philosophical thought.” Michael Rota, associate professor of philosophy, University of St. Thomas*

“C. Stephen Evans has performed a tremendous service for Christian philosophers, especially those new to the field. A History of Western Philosophy is an excellent single-volume history of the progress of western philosophical thought. Dr. Evans hits all the major players, concentrating on the essentials of each philosopher’s contribution to the ongoing discussion. His style is clear, lucid, and accessible for the novice while also presenting insightful evaluations for those who are advanced. It is a superb work that should be on the shelf of every thoughtful Christian.” Mark W. Foreman, professor of philosophy and religion, Liberty University

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