

Liber primus metaphysice

20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

AN ILLUSTRATED
BRIEF HISTORY OF
WESTERN
PHILOSOPHY

ANTHONY KENNY

WILEY Blackwell

An Illustrated Brief History of
WESTERN
PHILOSOPHY
20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

An Illustrated Brief History of
**WESTERN
PHILOSOPHY**
20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

ANTHONY KENNY

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2019
© 2019 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd

Edition History

First Edition (Wiley Blackwell, 1998); Second Edition (Wiley Blackwell, 2006)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by law. Advice on how to obtain permission to reuse material from this title is available at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

The right of Anthony Kenny to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with law.

Registered Office(s)

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Office

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, customer services, and more information about Wiley products visit us at www.wiley.com.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty

While the publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this work, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives, written sales materials or promotional statements for this work. The fact that an organization, website, or product is referred to in this work as a citation and/or potential source of further information does not mean that the publisher and authors endorse the information or services the organization, website, or product may provide or recommendations it may make. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a specialist where appropriate. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kenny, Anthony, 1931- author.

Title: An illustrated brief history of western philosophy, 20th anniversary edition / Sir Anthony Kenny, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

Description: 3rd Edition. | Hoboken : Wiley, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index. |

Identifiers: LCCN 2018029651 (print) | LCCN 2018031024 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119531173 (Adobe PDF) | ISBN 9781119452805 (ePub) | ISBN 9781119452799 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Philosophy--History.

Classification: LCC B72 (ebook) | LCC B72 .K44 2018 (print) | DDC 190--dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018029651>

Cover image: Frontispiece of 'Opera', vol.II, by Aristotle.

Venice: A. Torresanus, 1483. PML 21195. New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library.

© 2018. Photo The Morgan Library & Museum / Art Resource, NY / Scala, Florence

Cover design by Wiley

Set in 10/13 pt GalliardStd-Roman by Thomson Digital, Noida, India

Pb printing 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

	Preface	xi
	List of Illustrations	xv
	Acknowledgements	xvii
	Introduction	xix
I	PHILOSOPHY IN ITS INFANCY	1
	The Milesians	3
	Xenophanes	5
	Heraclitus	6
	The School of Parmenides	8
	Empedocles	14
	The Atomists	17
II	THE ATHENS OF SOCRATES	20
	The Athenian Empire	20
	Anaxagoras	22
	The Sophists	22
	Socrates	24
	The <i>Euthyphro</i>	26
	The <i>Crito</i>	29
	The <i>Phaedo</i>	30
III	THE PHILOSOPHY OF PLATO	36
	Life and Works	36
	The Theory of Ideas	38

CONTENTS

	Plato's <i>Republic</i>	41
	The <i>Theaetetus</i> and the <i>Sophist</i>	50
IV	THE SYSTEM OF ARISTOTLE	57
	Plato's Pupil, Alexander's Teacher	57
	The Foundation of Logic	59
	The Theory of Drama	63
	Moral Philosophy: Virtue and Happiness	64
	Moral Philosophy: Wisdom and Understanding	68
	Politics	71
	Science and Explanation	72
	Words and Things	74
	Motion and Change	76
	Soul, Sense, and Intellect	78
	Metaphysics	81
V	GREEK PHILOSOPHY AFTER ARISTOTLE	85
	The Hellenistic Era	85
	Epicureanism	87
	Stoicism	89
	Scepticism	91
	Rome and its Empire	93
	Jesus of Nazareth	94
	Christianity and Gnosticism	96
	Neo-Platonism	99
VI	EARLY CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY	102
	Arianism and Orthodoxy	102
	The Theology of Incarnation	105
	The Life of Augustine	107
	The City of God and the Mystery of Grace	110
	Boethius and Philoponus	113
VII	EARLY MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY	118
	John the Scot	118
	Alkindi and Avicenna	121
	The Feudal System	123
	Saint Anselm	124
	Abelard and Héloïse	126

CONTENTS

Abelard's Logic	128
Abelard's Ethics	130
Averroes	131
Maimonides	133
VIII PHILOSOPHY IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY	135
An Age of Innovation	135
Saint Bonaventure	138
Thirteenth-Century Logic	140
Aquinas' Life and Works	141
Aquinas' Natural Theology	143
Matter, Form, Substance, and Accident	145
Aquinas on Essence and Existence	147
Aquinas' Philosophy of Mind	148
Aquinas' Moral Philosophy	149
IX OXFORD PHILOSOPHERS	154
The Fourteenth-Century University	154
Duns Scotus	155
Ockham's Logic of Language	162
Ockham's Political Theory	164
The Oxford Calculators	167
John Wyclif	168
X RENAISSANCE PHILOSOPHY	171
The Renaissance	171
Free-will: Rome vs. Louvain	172
Renaissance Platonism	175
Machiavelli	176
More's Utopia	179
The Reformation	181
Post-Reformation Philosophy	185
Bruno and Galileo	187
Francis Bacon	189
XI THE AGE OF DESCARTES	194
The Wars of Religion	194
The Life of Descartes	195
The Doubt and the <i>Cogito</i>	198

CONTENTS

	The Essence of Mind	200
	God, Mind, and Body	201
	The Material World	205
XII	ENGLISH PHILOSOPHY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY	209
	The Empiricism of Thomas Hobbes	209
	Hobbes' Political Philosophy	211
	The Political Theory of John Locke	214
	Locke on Ideas and Qualities	216
	Substances and Persons	219
XIII	CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV	224
	Blaise Pascal	224
	Spinoza and Malebranche	227
	Leibniz	232
XIV	BRITISH PHILOSOPHY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	237
	Berkeley	237
	Hume's Philosophy of Mind	242
	Hume on Causation	246
	Reid and Common Sense	248
XV	THE ENLIGHTENMENT	251
	The <i>Philosophes</i>	251
	Rousseau	252
	Revolution and Romanticism	256
XVI	THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF KANT	259
	Kant's Copernican Revolution	259
	The Transcendental Aesthetic	261
	The Transcendental Analytic: The Deduction of the Categories	263
	The Transcendental Analytic: The System of Principles	266
	The Transcendental Dialectic: The Paralogisms of Pure Reason	269
	The Transcendental Dialectic: The Antinomies of Pure Reason	271
	The Transcendental Dialectic: The Critique of Natural Theology	274
	Kant's Moral Philosophy	276

CONTENTS

XVII	GERMAN IDEALISM AND MATERIALISM	280
	Fichte	280
	Hegel	281
	Marx and the Young Hegelians	285
	Capitalism and its Discontents	287
XVIII	THE UTILITARIANS	290
	Jeremy Bentham	290
	The Utilitarianism of J. S. Mill	295
	Mill's Logic	297
XIX	THREE NINETEENTH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHERS	301
	Schopenhauer	301
	Kierkegaard	307
	Nietzsche	310
XX	THREE MODERN MASTERS	313
	Charles Darwin	313
	John Henry Newman	318
	Sigmund Freud	322
XXI	LOGIC AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF MATHEMATICS	329
	Frege's Logic	329
	Frege's Logicism	331
	Frege's Philosophy of Logic	334
	Russell's Paradox	335
	Russell's Theory of Descriptions	337
	Logical Analysis	340
XXII	CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY	342
	Henri Bergson	342
	Husserl's Phenomenology	347
	The Existentialism of Heidegger	349
	The Existentialism of Sartre and de Beauvoir	351

CONTENTS

XXIII	THE PHILOSOPHY OF WITTGENSTEIN	356
	<i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i>	356
	Logical Positivism	359
	<i>Philosophical Investigations</i>	361
XXIV	RECENT CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY	372
	The Frankfurt School	372
	Jacques Derrida	379
	Jurgen Habermas	382
XXV	RECENT ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY	388
	Elizabeth Anscombe	389
	W. V. O. Quine	390
	Donald Davidson	393
	Peter Geach	394
	Peter Strawson	396
	American Metaphysics	397
	The Cartesian Revival	399
	Analytical Ethics	401
	John Rawls	405
	Richard Rorty	406
	Afterword	409
	Suggestions for Further Reading	412
	Index	421

PREFACE

In the year 1946 Bertrand Russell wrote a one-volume *History of Western Philosophy*, which is still in demand. When it was suggested to me that I might write a modern equivalent, I was at first daunted by the challenge. Russell was one of the greatest philosophers of the century, and he won a Nobel Prize for Literature: how could anyone venture to compete? However, the book is not generally regarded as one of Russell's best, and he is notoriously unfair to some of the greatest philosophers of the past, such as Aristotle and Kant. Moreover, he operated with assumptions about the nature of philosophy and philosophical method which would be questioned by most philosophers at the present time. There does indeed seem to be room for a book which would offer a comprehensive overview of the history of the subject from a contemporary philosophical viewpoint.

Russell's book, however inaccurate in detail, is entertaining and stimulating and it has given many people their first taste of the excitement of philosophy. I aim in this book to reach the same audience as Russell: I write for the general educated reader, who has no special philosophical training, and who wishes to learn the contribution that philosophy has made to the culture we live in. I have tried to avoid using any philosophical terms without explaining them when they first appear. The dialogues of Plato offer a model here: Plato was able to make philosophical points without using any technical vocabulary, because none existed when he wrote. For this reason, among others, I have treated several of his dialogues at some length in the second and third chapters of the book.

The quality of Russell's writing which I have been at most pains to imitate is the clarity and vigour of his style. (He once wrote that his own models as prose writers were Baedeker and John Milton.) A reader new to philosophy is bound to find some parts of this book difficult to follow.

It is not possible to explain in advance what philosophy is about. The best way to learn philosophy is to read the works of great philosophers. This book is meant to show the reader what topics have interested philosophers and what methods they have used to address them. By themselves, summaries of philosophical doctrines are of little use: a reader is cheated if merely told a philosopher's conclusions without an

indication of the methods by which they were reached. For this reason I do my best to present, and criticize, the reasoning used by philosophers in support of their theses. I mean no disrespect by engaging thus in argument with the great minds of the past. That is the way to take a philosopher seriously: not to parrot his text, but to battle with it, and learn from its strengths and weaknesses.

Philosophy is simultaneously the most exciting and the most frustrating of subjects. Philosophy is exciting because it is the broadest of all disciplines, exploring the basic concepts which run through all our talking and thinking on any topic whatever. Moreover, it can be undertaken without any special preliminary training or instruction. But philosophy is also frustrating, because, unlike scientific or historical disciplines, it gives no new information about nature or society. Philosophy aims to provide not knowledge, but understanding; and its history shows how difficult it has been, even for the very greatest minds, to develop a complete and coherent vision. It can be said without exaggeration that no human being has yet succeeded in reaching a complete and coherent understanding even of the language we use to think our simplest thoughts.

Philosophy is neither science nor religion, though historically it has been entwined with both. I have tried to bring out how in many areas philosophical thought grew out of religious reflection and grew into empirical science. Many issues which were treated by great past philosophers would nowadays no longer count as philosophical. Accordingly, I have concentrated on those areas of their endeavour which would still be regarded as philosophical today, such as ethics, metaphysics, and the philosophy of mind.

Like Russell I have made a personal choice of the philosophers to include in the history, and the length of time to be devoted to each. I have not, however, departed as much as Russell did from the proportions commonly accepted in the philosophical canon. Like him, I have included discussions of non-philosophers who have influenced philosophical thinking; that is why Darwin and Freud appear on my list of subjects. I have devoted considerable space to ancient and medieval philosophy, though not as much as Russell, who at the mid-point of his book had not got further than Alcuin and Charlemagne. I have ended the story at the time of the Second World War, and I have not attempted to cover twentieth-century continental philosophy.

Again like Russell, I have sketched in the social, historical, and religious background to the lives of the philosophers, at greater length when treating of remote periods and very briefly as we approach modern times.

My hope in publishing this book is that it may convey to those curious about philosophy something of the excitement of the subject, and point them towards the actual writings of the great thinkers of the past.

I am indebted to the editorial staff at Blackwells, and to Anthony Grahame, for assistance in the preparation of the book; and to three anonymous referees who made helpful suggestions for its improvement. I am particularly grateful to my wife,

PREFACE

Nancy Kenny, who read the entire book in manuscript and struck out many passages as unintelligible to the non-philosopher. I am sure that my readers will share my gratitude to her for sparing them unprofitable toil.

January 1998

It is now twenty years since the first publication of this history. An illustrated edition came out in 2006. The present edition contains a new introduction, and three new chapters, two on twentieth-century continental philosophy and one on post-Wittgenstein analytic philosophy. The main text remains unchanged, but I have added a completely new set of suggestions for further reading, to reflect publications on the history of philosophy in recent years.

For help with this edition I am indebted to Marissa Koors and Giles Flitney.

May 2018

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Plates

Between pages 226 and 227

- 1 Plato's Academy
- 2 The title page of a fifteenth-century manuscript translation of Aristotle's *History of Animals*
- 3 Lucretius' *De rerum natura*
- 4 Saint Thomas Aquinas introducing Saints Francis and Dominic to Dante
- 5 The intellectual soul being divinely infused into the human body
- 6 Machiavelli's austere apartment
- 7 Anrep's mosaic of lucidity in the National Gallery contains a portrait of Bertrand Russell
- 8 Wittgenstein in New York, as imagined by Eduardo Paolozzi

Figures

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 1 | Pythagoras in Raphael's <i>School of Athens</i> | 2 |
| 2 | Parmenides and Heraclitus as portrayed by Raphael in the <i>School of Athens</i> | 13 |
| 3 | A herm of Socrates bearing a quotation from the <i>Crito</i> | 30 |
| 4 | Plato's use of animals to symbolize the different parts of the human soul (by Titian) | 49 |
| 5 | Aristotle, painted by Justus of Ghent | 60 |
| 6 | Athena introducing a soul into a body | 80 |
| 7 | A modern reconstruction of the schools of Athens | 86 |
| 8 | A fifth-century mosaic in Gerasa representing the city of Alexandria | 99 |
| 9 | Saint Augustine represented on a winged fifteenth-century altarpiece | 109 |
| 10 | John Scotus Eriugena disputing with a Greek abbot Theodore | 119 |
| 11 | Sculpture showing Abelard with Héloïse | 127 |
| 12 | Roundel of Duns Scotus | 156 |
| 13 | William Ockham | 163 |
| 14 | The title page of Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i> | 180 |
| 15 | The title page of Bacon's <i>Instauratio Magna</i> | 190 |

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

16	Portrait of Descartes by Jan Baptist Weenix	197
17	Descartes' sketch of the mechanism whereby pain is felt by the soul	204
18	Portrait of Hobbes by Jan. B. Gaspar	212
19	Portrait of Baruch Spinoza by S. van Hoogstraten	231
20	David Hume, in a medallion by J. Tassie	242
21	Allan Ramsay's portrait of J. J. Rousseau	254
22	Title page of Kant's first <i>Critique</i>	270
23	Jeremy Bentham's 'auto-icon'	291
24	Portrait of John Stuart Mill, by G. F. Watts	296
25	A cartoon by Wilhelm Busch of Schopenhauer with his poodle	302
26	Photograph of Charles Darwin	314
27	Freud's sketch of the Ego and the Id	325
28	A page of Frege's derivation of arithmetic from logic	333
29	Bertrand Russell as a young man	339
30	Henri Bergson made evolution the central pillar of his philosophy	343
31	Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir jointly presided over French intellectual life	353
32	Wittgenstein's identity card as an artilleryman in the Austrian army in 1918	357
33	Jacques Derrida often denied that he was a philosopher – perhaps correctly	381
34	The fall of the Berlin Wall was the beginning of the end of Marxism as an official philosophy	384
35	Jurgen Habermas was influential in both continental and analytic circles	386
36	Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Geach made a philosophically formidable married couple	389
37	Willard van Orman Quine was for many years regarded as the foremost US philosopher	391
38	The Second Vatican Council ended the dominance of scholasticism in Catholic Universities	395
39	Philippa Foot reintroduced virtue as a central topic in ethics	403

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author and publisher gratefully acknowledge the following for permission to reproduce copyright material:

T. S. Eliot: for an excerpt from Part IV of ‘The Dry Salvages’ from *Four Quartets*, copyright © 1941 by T. S. Eliot and renewed 1969 by Esme Valerie Eliot, and for an excerpt from Part II of ‘Little Gidding’ from *Four Quartets*, copyright © 1943 by T. S. Eliot and renewed 1971 by Esme Valerie Eliot, to Harcourt Brace & Company and Faber & Faber Ltd. (Reprinted by Faber in *Collected Poems 1909–1962* by T. S. Eliot.)

W. B. Yeats: for lines from ‘Among School Children’ from *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*, Volume 1: *The Poems*, revised and edited by Richard J. Finneran, copyright © 1928 by Macmillan Publishing Company, renewed © 1956 by Georgie Yeats, to A. P. Watt Ltd., on behalf of Michael Yeats, and Scribner, a division of Simon & Schuster.

The publisher apologizes for any errors or omissions in the above list and would be grateful to be notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in the next edition or reprint of this book.

INTRODUCTION

A person wondering whether to read a history of philosophy may reasonably wish to ascertain in advance what is the nature of the discipline whose history she is offered. However, it is by no means easy to give a plain and uncontentious answer to the question ‘what is philosophy?’

The word has meant different things at different times and in different cultures, and even at the present time it carries different connotations in different places. If you look at the shelves in a bookstore labelled ‘philosophy’ you will find books on self-help and on the environment, books containing advice on how to make yourself a better person and the world a better place. On the other hand, if you look at the lecture lists of a university philosophy faculty you will be invited to be instructed on such topics as the metaphysics of entanglement and to hear the answer to questions such as ‘Are there synthetic *a priori* propositions?’

Philosophy, as treated in the present book, will be conceived neither as broadly as in the bookstore definition nor as narrowly as in the faculty definition. But, sadly, it will only be after reading the book that the reader will understand exactly how I believe the term is to be understood.

But I can say at the outset that philosophy is simultaneously the most exciting and frustrating of subjects. It is exciting because it is the broadest of all disciplines, since it explores the basic concepts which run through all our talking and thinking. It is frustrating because its great generality makes it extremely difficult: not even the greatest philosophers have succeeded in reaching a complete and coherent understanding even of the language that we use to think our simplest thoughts. The man who is, as it were, the patron saint of philosophers, Socrates, claimed that the only way in which he surpassed others in wisdom was that he was aware of his own ignorance.

This may well seem a dispiriting introduction. The counterbalancing good news is that philosophy does not require any special preliminary training, and can be undertaken by anyone who is willing to think hard and follow a line of reasoning. In itself, it does not call for any mathematical skill or literary connoisseurship.

A first crude attempt to define the subject is to say that philosophy is what the great philosophers did. This is fairly watertight as an initial account: we would laugh out of court any definition of the philosopher that ruled out Plato and Aristotle. But the

problem remains unsolved. Those two giants were not only philosophers – Plato was a magnificent dramatist, and Aristotle a pioneering scientist – and we have to make up our minds what parts or aspects of their works count as philosophy pure and simple.

The philosophy section in the bookstore will very likely be placed between the section on religion and the section on science. Throughout its history philosophy has been entwined with both these activities: it has marched through the ages in a central position with religion on its right hand and science on its left hand. In many areas of study philosophical thought grew out of religious reflection and grew into empirical science. Many issues which in the past were discussed by philosophers would nowadays be regarded as the province of science: the structure of matter and the history of the cosmos, for instance. But long before philosophers addressed these issues they were the topics of religious myths.

Religion, philosophy, and science all offer answers to fundamental questions, responses to the wonder which is the starting point of the human intellectual quest. Religion suggests answers by appealing to sacred texts regarded as revelations from a superhuman power; science provides answers by observation of, and experiment upon, the natural world. Philosophy has no sacred texts, and operates not by experience but by pure thought. In this it resembles mathematics, which is perhaps its closest kin in the family of intellectual disciplines.

It can be said that philosophy is the younger sister of religion, and the elder sister of science. In Greek and Hebrew culture mythical accounts of the origin and nature of the world preceded any scientific conjectures. In ancient Athens it was Plato who divorced philosophy from religion by his devastating criticism of the theology of the Homeric poems that were the nearest thing the Greeks had to a Bible. Aristotle, on the other hand, brought under the umbrella of philosophy a number of sciences, such as astronomy, cosmology, physics, and biology. But the one discipline that he claimed to have invented, namely logic, was, like philosophy, closer to mathematics than to science. And logic remained the partner of philosophy when the sciences had, in the course of history, set up house independently.

Aristotle made a distinction between practical sciences and theoretical sciences. What he meant by practical sciences were disciplines such as ethics and politics, which guide behaviour and teach us how to relate to each other. Such studies, we might say, belong on the right-hand side of philosophy, where its concerns overlap with those of religion. Theoretical sciences have no practical goal, but pursue truth for its own sake. Prominent among these is what he called ‘physics’, from the Greek word for nature. For centuries it bore the name ‘Natural Philosophy’, and it belongs on the left-hand side of philosophy, where it is concerned with the same objects as what we would nowadays call science.

It can indeed be said that Aristotle invented the concept of science as we understand it and as it has been understood since the Renaissance. First, he is the first person whose surviving works show detailed observations of natural

phenomena. Secondly, he was the first philosopher to have a sound grasp of the relationship in scientific method between observation and theory. Thirdly, he identified and classified different scientific disciplines and explored their relationships to each other. Indeed, the very concept of a distinct discipline is due to him. Fourthly, he is the first professor to have organized his lectures into courses, and to have taken trouble over their appropriate place in a syllabus. Fifthly, he set up the first research institute of which we have any detailed knowledge, the Lyceum, in which a number of scholars and investigators joined in collaborative inquiry and documentation. Sixthly, and not least important, he was the first person in history to build up a research library – not simply a handful of books for his own bookshelf, but a systematic collection to be used by his colleagues and to be handed on to posterity.

Aristotle's contributions to practical philosophy, his treatises on ethics and politics, are still read today, and not just out of antiquarian interest. But his contributions to natural philosophy – physics, chemistry, biology, and physiology – have long ago been superseded. In the second century AD the medic Galen proved Aristotle wrong on a crucial point of physiology: it was the brain, and not the heart, that was the primary vehicle of human intellectual activity. In the sixth century an Aristotelian scholar called John Philoponus demolished his master's physics, denying Aristotle's account of motion and his thesis that the world had no beginning.

In late antiquity the most significant event for the history of philosophy was the advent, and eventual political triumph, of Christianity. A recent historian of philosophy, Anthony Gottlieb, describes its impact in terms of the tale of Sleeping Beauty. 'Having pricked its finger on Christian theology, philosophy fell asleep for about a thousand years until awakened by the kiss of Descartes.'

Certainly, from the period when the Christian Emperor Justinian closed the schools of Athens in 529, philosophy was for many centuries subordinate to theology. Thinkers were no longer free to follow an argument wherever it led in accordance with the philosophical ideal held up long ago by Socrates. Henceforth, if an argument led to a conclusion in conflict with Christian doctrine, then it must be given up. But the relationship between philosophy and religion operated in both directions. The first great Christian philosopher, St Augustine, introduced a heavy dose of Platonic philosophy into a community that had begun as a Jewish sect. It must also be admitted that the religious strictures were not always harmful to philosophy. Philoponus' improvement upon Aristotle's physics was largely motivated by a desire to defend the Judeo-Christian doctrine of creation.

During the seventh and eighth centuries philosophy did go to sleep throughout Christendom, and its slumbers were hardly disturbed by the attempts of Charlemagne (crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800) to revive the study of letters. The kiss that awoke it came from an unlikely quarter: from the realm of Islam which had spread from Arabia across Africa and southern Europe in the two centuries after the death of Muhammad in 633. In Islam as in Christendom philosophy was intertwined with religion in an embrace that was not always easy. The greatest Muslim

philosopher of the period, Avicenna (980–1037), was anxious to ensure that his teachings did not come into conflict with the Koran, but his work was regarded as suspect by conservative mullahs.

During the ninth and tenth centuries it was Islam that kept alive the flame of Greek philosophy. It was not until the twelfth century that Aristotle's works were available in Latin, in translations that were sometimes from the original Greek and sometimes from Arabic versions. They were studied in conjunction with the commentaries of the Arabic philosopher Averroes.

Initially regarded as suspect by Church authorities, the Aristotelian texts became the basis of university courses for several centuries.

The institution of universities was no less important a factor in the framework of medieval philosophy than the dominance of the Christian religion. The university is, in essentials, a thirteenth-century innovation, if by 'university' we mean a corporation of people engaged professionally, full-time, in the teaching and expansion of a corpus of knowledge in various subjects, handing it on to their pupils, with an agreed syllabus, agreed methods of teaching, and agreed professional standards. Universities and parliaments came into existence at roughly the same time, and have proved themselves the most long-lived of all medieval inventions.

A typical medieval university consisted of four faculties: the universal undergraduate faculty of arts, and the three higher faculties, linked to professions, of theology, law, and medicine. Students in the faculties learnt both by listening to lectures from their seniors and, as they progressed, by giving lectures to their juniors. A teacher licensed in one university could teach in any university, and graduates migrated freely in an age when all academics used Latin as a common language. Teaching was carried out not only by lecturing, but by means of disputations in which one student would argue for one side of a case, and another for another, and the master would sum up in favour of one or the other, or more likely resolve the dispute by drawing distinctions. This feature of medieval pedagogy survives today in the adversarial structure that marks the procedure in English-language courts, in contrast to the investigative methods of continental courts.

Philosophy belonged in the faculty of arts, but many of the topics it studied overlapped with those that formed the subject matter of the theology course. It was St Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century who demarcated clearly the boundary between the two disciplines. He is best known for his massive contribution to Christian theology, the *Summa Theologiae*. But he wrote another, shorter, treatise, the *Summa contra Gentiles*, which takes its initial stand on purely philosophical premisses that could be accepted by Jews and Muslims and pagans. He explained his method thus:

Mahometans and pagans do not agree with us in accepting the authority of any Scripture we might use in refuting them, in the way in which we can dispute against Jews by appeal to the Old Testament and against heretics by appeal to the New. These people accept neither. Hence we must have recourse to natural reason, to which all men are forced to assent.

Thus he sets out the difference between revealed theology, which is based on sacred texts, and natural theology, which is a branch of philosophy. He believed that there were some religious truths, such as the existence and attributes of God, that could be established by pure reason, while others, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, could be proved only by appeal to the authority of the Bible and the Church.

When we today look for material in medieval texts that is relevant to philosophy as nowadays understood, we can often find it in theological rather than philosophical treatises. But as the middle ages progressed the division between natural and revealed theology became sharper, as thinkers of a more sceptical turn than Thomas began to doubt the powers of natural theology and were thrown more and more upon an appeal to revelation. At the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther denounced natural theology as a delusion, as part of his demotion of human reason by comparison with divine grace.

The fact that medieval university courses were based on Aristotelian texts had in the long run a paradoxical result. It was that though Aristotle can claim to be the founder of science, his authority came to be a massive obstacle to science's progress. The history of science from the time of the Renaissance is a series of secessions, in one discipline after another, from the dominion of Aristotelian philosophy. Almost all of these developments took place outside universities, and were initiated by independent thinkers.

Aristotelian physics, already challenged in antiquity, was the first to be discarded. In the sixteenth century Copernicus and his successors showed that Aristotle was wrong to believe that the earth was the centre of the universe and that it was surrounded by crystalline spheres that carried the heavenly bodies. In the seventeenth century Newton's laws of motion replaced those of Aristotle that had been shown by Philoponus to be erroneous.

Chemistry was the next discipline to detach itself. The theory of the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water, each based on a combination of the properties of heat, cold, wetness, and dryness, had long survived its ancient formulation. The researches into air and fire of the eighteenth-century French chemist Lavoisier showed that combustion could take place only in the presence of a gas that he named 'oxygen' which was absorbed in the course of combustion. Lavoisier also discovered that water was a compound of oxygen and another element he named 'hydrogen'. The four elements inherited from Greek philosophy were permanently displaced in favour of a new more rigorous table of elements.

In the nineteenth century Aristotle's belief in the fixity of animal and plant species was undercut by Charles Darwin's discovery of evolution by natural selection. Psychology, too, set up as an experimental discipline quite distinct from the mixture of philosophy and physiology presented in Aristotle's treatise *On the Soul*. In the present century many would claim that psychology – whether philosophical or experimental – has itself been superseded by neurophysiology.

What do we learn from the way in which disciplines that in antiquity and in the middle ages were part of philosophy have since become independent sciences? We

can say that a discipline remains philosophical as long as its concepts are unclarified and its methods are controversial. Perhaps no scientific concepts are ever fully clarified, and no scientific methods are ever totally uncontroversial; if so, there is always a philosophical element left in every science. But once problems can be unproblematically stated, when concepts are uncontroversially standardized, and where a consensus emerges for the methodology of solution, then we have a science setting up home independently, rather than a branch of philosophy.

Philosophy, once called the queen of the sciences, and once called their handmaid, is perhaps better thought of as the womb, or the midwife, of the sciences. But in fact sciences emerge from philosophy not so much by parturition as by fission, as a single example will suffice to show.

In the seventeenth century philosophers were much exercised by the problem which of our ideas are innate and which are acquired. This problem split into two problems, one psychological (what do we owe to heredity and what do we owe to environment?) and one epistemological (how much of our knowledge depends on experience and how much is independent of it?) The first question was handed over to psychology; the second question remained philosophical. But the second question itself split into a number of questions, one of which was ‘is mathematics merely an extension of logic, or is it an independent body of truth?’ This was given a precise answer by the work of logicians and mathematicians in the twentieth century. The answer was not philosophical, but mathematical. So here we had an initial, confused, philosophical question which ramified in two directions – towards psychology and towards mathematics, leaving in the middle a philosophical residue which remains to be churned over, concerning the nature of mathematical propositions.

Despite its close links to the sciences, philosophy itself is not a science. Philosophy is not a matter of expanding knowledge, of acquiring new truths about the world. The philosopher is not in possession of information that is denied to others. Philosophy is not a matter of knowledge, it is a matter of understanding, that is to say, of organizing what is known.

If philosophy is not a science, shall we say that it is an art like poetry, fiction, and drama? It does indeed resemble the arts in certain ways. In the arts, classic works do not date. If we want to learn physics or chemistry, as opposed to their history, we don’t nowadays read Newton or Faraday. But we read the literature of Homer and Shakespeare not merely to learn about the quaint things that passed through people’s minds in far off days of long ago. Surely, it may well be argued, the same is true of philosophy. It is not merely in a spirit of antiquarian curiosity that we read Aristotle today. Great philosophy is essentially the work of individual genius, and Kant does not supersede Plato any more than Shakespeare supersedes Homer.

Philosophy resembles the arts in having a significant relation to a canon. A philosopher situates the problems to be addressed by reference to a series of classical texts. Because it has no specific subject matter, but only characteristic methods, philosophy is defined as a discipline by the activities of its great practitioners. As

remarked above, the earliest people whom we recognize as philosophers, the pre-Socratics, were also scientists, and several of them were also religious leaders. They did not yet think of themselves as belonging to a common profession, the one with which we today claim continuity. Those of us who call ourselves philosophers today can genuinely claim to be the heirs of Plato and Aristotle. But we are only a small subset of their heirs. What distinguishes us from their other heirs, and what entitles us to inherit their name, is that – unlike the physicists, the astronomers, the medics, the linguists, and so on – we philosophers pursue the goals of Plato and Aristotle only by the same methods as were already available to them.

However, philosophy resembles the sciences, in that its primary aim is to teach. Poetry, fiction, and drama can tell us much about human nature and the natural world. But the instructive effect of literature is oblique in comparison with that of science and philosophy, because of its essential relationship to aesthetic pleasure, whether it entertains or elevates. Philosophy and science, on the other hand, are essentially directed to the pursuit of truth.

Though it is not a part of science, philosophy is something that must precede and underpin scientific investigation. Suppose a cognitive scientist tells us that he is going to find out what happens in the brain when we think. We ask him, before starting his research, to be quite sure that he knows what thinking is, what ‘think’ means. Perhaps he will reply that in order to get clear about the meaning of the word all we have to do is to watch ourselves while we think: what we observe will be what the word means. But if we give serious attention to the ways in which we use the word ‘think’ we see that this is a misunderstanding of the concept of *thought*. If a neurophysiologist does not have a sound grasp of that concept prior to his investigations, then whatever he discovers, it will not tell us much about thought. He may protest that he is not interested in the linguistic trivialities which entertain philosophers. But after all, he is talking our ordinary language in order to identify the problem he wants to solve, and in order to define the boundaries of his research programme. He needs, therefore, to take ordinary language seriously: he should not dismiss it as ‘folk-psychology’.

In fact, it is possible for philosophy to be objectively rational without being a branch of science. Philosophy is, indeed, the quest for rationality across all disciplines, whether sciences, humanities, or arts; and its primary method is the attentive study of the language in which these different forms of rationality find their expression. A philosopher studies language, but not as a philologist does. On the one hand, the philosopher has a greater concern with the social practices and institutions in which the language is embedded; on the other hand, she is not concerned with the idioms and idiosyncracies of particular natural languages, but seeks to identify among their great variety the conceptual structures that underlie them all.

Some thinkers hope that in a better future philosophy will be wholly replaced by science in the way in which Aristotelian natural philosophy has been replaced by fundamental physics. I believe that this is an illusion. There are branches of

philosophy that will always retain an unscientific residue, in particular the disciplines that concern human beings, such as philosophy of mind and philosophy of language. They will remain forever philosophical because of their self-referential structure. The philosophy of mind uses thought to investigate thought, and the philosophy of language uses language to investigate language.

The ambition of philosophy is to reach an understanding of language and the world that transcends particular times and places; but any individual philosopher must accept that he will never reach that goal. This has been well put by Thomas Nagel in his book *The View From Nowhere*. ‘Even those who regard philosophy as real and important know that they are at a particular, and we may hope, early stage of its development, limited by their own primitive intellectual capacities, and relying on the partial insights of a few great figures of the past. As we judge their results to be mistaken in fundamental ways, so we must assume that even the best efforts of our own time will come to seem blind eventually.’

In his book Nagel urged those of us who are philosophers to combine unashamed pride in the loftiness of our goal, with undeluded modesty about the poverty of our achievement, and to resist the temptation to turn philosophy into something less difficult and more shallow than it is. He ended his treatment of philosophical problems with words that have long echoed in my mind. ‘I do not feel equal to the problems treated in this book. They seem to me to require an order of intelligence wholly different from mine.’ Others who have tried to address the central questions of philosophy will recognize the feeling.

You may approach the history of philosophy from the side of history or from the side of philosophy. If you are historian, wishing to understand the peoples and societies of the past, you may read their philosophy to grasp the conceptual climate in which they thought and acted. If you are a philosopher you may study the great dead philosophers in order to seek illumination upon themes of your own philosophical inquiry. As a philosopher you will be most interested in those branches of philosophy, such as ethics and metaphysics, which remain relevant today; as a historian you may well take more interest in those branches of natural philosophy that have been superseded by science.

The historian of philosophy, whether primarily interested in philosophy or primarily interested in history, cannot help being both a philosopher and a historian. A historian of painting does not have to be a painter, a historian of medicine does not, qua historian, practise medicine. But a historian of philosophy cannot help doing philosophy in the very writing of history. It is not just that someone who knows no philosophy will be a bad historian of philosophy; it is equally true that someone who has no idea how to cook will be a bad historian of cookery. The link between philosophy and its history is a far closer one. The historical task itself forces historians of philosophy to paraphrase their subjects’ opinions, to offer reasons why past thinkers held the opinions they did, to speculate on the premisses left tacit in their arguments, and to evaluate the coherence and cogency of the inferences they drew. But the supplying of reasons for

philosophical conclusions, the detection of hidden premisses in philosophical arguments, and the logical evaluation of philosophical inferences are themselves full-blooded philosophical activities. Consequently any serious history of philosophy must itself be an exercise in philosophy as well as in history.

How are we to view the different forms that philosophy has taken over the centuries? If philosophy were a science we could look on it as an ongoing, co-operative, cumulative intellectual venture in which from time to time fresh discoveries are made. On that view, we twenty-first-century philosophers have an advantage over earlier practitioners of the discipline. We stand, no doubt, on the shoulders of other and greater philosophers, but we do stand above them. We have superannuated Plato and Kant. But this, as we have seen, is a mistaken view: the great works of the best philosophers do not date.

Is there, then, any sense in which philosophy makes progress? Philosophy does not make progress in the way that science does, with the discoveries of the most recent generation building on, and making obsolete, the theories of previous generations. Contemporary philosophers, of course, know some things that the greatest philosophers of the past did not know; but the things they know are not philosophical matters but the truths that have been discovered by the sciences begotten of philosophy. New developments in philosophy commonly consist in the application of philosophy to new areas of discourse as human life becomes more complicated. Thus in addition to simple ethics – the ethics of the human condition – we now have business ethics, medical ethics, and environmental ethics.

Some people believe that the major task of philosophy is to cure us of intellectual confusion. On this modest view of the philosopher's role, the tasks to be addressed differ across history, since each period needs a different form of therapy. The knots into which the undisciplined mind ties itself differ from age to age and different mental motions are necessary to untie the knots. A prevalent malady of our own age, for instance, is the temptation to think of the mind as a computer, whereas earlier ages were tempted to think of it as a telephone exchange, a pedal organ, a homunculus, or a spirit. Maladies of earlier ages may be dormant, such as the belief that the stars are living beings; or they may return, such as the belief that the stars enable one to predict human behaviour.

The therapeutic view of philosophy, however, may seem to allow only for variation over time, not for genuine progress. But that is not necessarily true. There are some things that philosophers of the present day understand which even the greatest philosophers of earlier generations failed to understand. For instance, philosophers clarify language by distinguishing between different senses of words; and once a distinction has been made, future philosophers have to take account of it in their deliberations. A confusion of thought may be so satisfactorily cleared up by a philosopher that it no longer offers temptation to the unwary thinker.

One such example appears early in this history. Parmenides, the founder of the discipline of ontology (the science of being) based much of his system on a systematic

confusion between different senses of the verb ‘to be’. Plato, in one of his dialogues, sorted out the issues so successfully that there has never again been an excuse for mixing them up: indeed, it now takes a great effort of philosophical imagination to work out exactly what led Parmenides into confusion in the first place.

Another example is the issue of free-will. At a certain point in the history of philosophy a distinction was made between two kinds of human freedom: liberty of indifference (ability to do otherwise) and liberty of spontaneity (ability to do what you want). Once this distinction has been made the question ‘Do human beings enjoy freedom of the will?’ has to be answered in a way that takes account of the distinction. Even someone who believes that the two kinds of liberty in fact coincide has to provide arguments to show this; he cannot simply ignore the distinction and hope to be taken seriously on the topic.

It is unsurprising, given the relationship of philosophy to a canon, that one notable feature of philosophical progress consists in coming to terms with, and interpreting, the thoughts of the great philosophers of the past. The great works of the past do not lose their importance in philosophy – but their intellectual contributions are not static. Each age interprets and applies philosophical classics to its own problems and aspirations. This is, in recent years, most visible in the field of ethics. The ethical works of Plato and Aristotle are as influential in moral thinking today as the works of any twentieth century moralists – this is easily verified by consulting any citation index – but they are being interpreted and applied in ways quite different from the ways in which they were used in the past. These new interpretations and applications do effect a genuine advance in our understanding of Plato and Aristotle, but of course it is understanding of quite a different kind from that which is given by a new study of the chronology of Plato’s early dialogues, or a stylometric comparison between Aristotle’s various ethical works. The new light we receive resembles rather the enhanced appreciation of Shakespeare we may get by seeing a new and intelligent production of *King Lear*.

The history of philosophy presented in this book is not based on any notion that the current state of philosophy represents the highest point of philosophical endeavour up to the present. On the contrary, its primary assumption is that in many respects the philosophy of the great dead philosophers has not dated, and that even today one may gain great illumination by a careful reading of the great works that we have been privileged to inherit.

The kernel of any kind of history of philosophy is exegesis: the close reading and interpretation of philosophical texts. Exegesis may be of two kinds, internal or external. In internal exegesis the interpreter tries to make the text coherent and consistent, employing the principle of charity in interpretation. In external exegesis the interpreter seeks to bring out the significance of the text by comparing it and contrasting it with other texts.

Exegesis is the common basis of the two quite different historical endeavours which I described earlier. In one, which we may call historical philosophy, the aim is