



# A Little History of Philosophy (Little Histories)

By Nigel Warburton

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## A Little History of Philosophy (Little Histories) By Nigel Warburton

Philosophy begins with questions about the nature of reality and how we should live. These were the concerns of Socrates, who spent his days in the ancient Athenian marketplace asking awkward questions, disconcerting the people he met by showing them how little they genuinely understood. This engaging book introduces the great thinkers in Western philosophy and explores their most compelling ideas about the world and how best to live in it.

In forty brief chapters, Nigel Warburton guides us on a chronological tour of the major ideas in the history of philosophy. He provides interesting and often quirky stories of the lives and deaths of thought-provoking philosophers from Socrates, who chose to die by hemlock poisoning rather than live on without the freedom to think for himself, to Peter Singer, who asks the disquieting philosophical and ethical questions that haunt our own times.

Warburton not only makes philosophy accessible, he offers inspiration to think, argue, reason, and ask in the tradition of Socrates. *A Little History of Philosophy* presents the grand sweep of humanity's search for philosophical understanding and invites all to join in the discussion.

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## A Little History of Philosophy (Little Histories) By Nigel Warburton Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“This book is a little classic.”—Merryn Williams, *Oxford Times*  
(Merryn Williams *Oxford Times*)

“A charming read.”—*Christian Century*  
(*Christian Century*)

“This brisk primer is, for the neophyte, a good place to start immersing oneself in the history of Western thought.”—*Publishers Weekly*  
(*Publishers Weekly*)

“This book is a little classic, invaluable for the man or woman in the street who would like to know more about philosophy. . . . [It] suggests that philosophy is ‘not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose’, but a thoroughly enjoyable way to stretch your mind.”—Merryn Williams, *Oxford Times* (Merryn Williams *Oxford Times* 2011-10-06)

“The book has a certain quality that comes from accepting a challenge under severe conditions, then taking it on without making a big deal of the whole thing. And the word for that quality is grace.”—Scott McLemee, *Inside Higher Ed*  
(Scott McLemee *Inside Higher Ed*)

“With this sweeping and enjoyable work the author affirms that deliberating on reality and questioning how our lives are best lived is still worth the trouble.”—*PopMatters*  
(*PopMatters*)

“If you are looking for a book about philosophy, Nigel Warburton’s *A Little History of Philosophy* is the place to begin...Accessible, funny and informative.”—*Sacramento News and Review*  
(*Sacramento News and Review*)

“Survey the entire history of (western) philosophy through short intellectual biographies of 40 philosophers from Socrates to Peter Singer, in as broadly approachable a style as EH Gombrich’s *A Little History of the World*. A tall order; that Warburton (of the excellent podcast Philosophy Bites) has succeeded so well is a triumph.”—Steven Poole, *The Guardian*  
(Steven Poole *The Guardian* 2011-11-12)

### From the Author

Why did you write this book?

Philosophy is one of the most stimulating and important subjects there is. We all philosophize some of the time when we think about how we should live, whether or not God exists, or how society should be organized. These questions have vexed the greatest minds for thousands of years. Yet some people are still daunted by philosophy. They think it's an impenetrable and obscure subject that has no relevance for them. I wanted to show this isn't true, that it's possible to write an accessible and enjoyable book without betraying

the spirit of the great thinkers of the past or making them obscure or irrelevant. I decided to focus on the Western tradition in philosophy and on one or two key ideas from each philosopher discussed rather than attempt an encyclopedic overview.

How is making philosophy accessible to all a challenge?

Part of the challenge of writing a book like this was to keep the language straightforward. Many philosophers have introduced complex technical terms that make their writing hard to follow. It's easy to fall into the habit of mirroring them. Writing in a way that doesn't presuppose knowledge is an excellent discipline, though, as there's no place to hide.

Which philosophers do you personally find most engaging?

Socrates, the great fifth-century Athenian philosopher who would cross-question passersby in the marketplace and reveal how little they really knew, is one of my personal favourites. His unwillingness to accept assumptions, and his passion for discovering the truth or, failing that, how little he knew, provide a model for all philosophers. Although he wasn't the first philosopher, he was the first great philosopher. He of all the philosophers in the book is the one I'd most like to have met. My second choice would be the eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume, a remarkable thinker who was also a superb writer.

What are the major themes of your book?

*A Little History of Philosophy* focuses on the major themes of philosophy: appearance and reality, the nature of the self, and questions about God's existence and about how we should live, both individually and as members of society. Throughout philosophy's history these have been the perennial themes. Each era gives them a new twist, but they aren't going to go away.

About the Author

**Nigel Warburton** is senior lecturer in philosophy, The Open University. He is the author of several popular introductions to philosophy and is the interviewer on the Philosophy Bites podcast. He lives in Oxford, UK.

## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Beatrice Pearson:**

This *A Little History of Philosophy (Little Histories)* book is not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book will be information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper anyone read a lot of information you will get. That *A Little History of Philosophy (Little Histories)* without we comprehend teach the one who looking at it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry *A Little History of Philosophy (Little Histories)* can bring once you are and not make your bag space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it in your lovely laptop even cell phone. This *A Little History of Philosophy (Little Histories)* having excellent arrangement in word along with layout, so you will not experience uninterested in reading.

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**Sharon Wilson:**

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