



WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

AN ANTHOLOGY

THIRD EDITION

EDITED BY JOHN COTTINGHAM

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Western Philosophy *An Anthology*

Third edition

Edited by
John Cottingham

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John Cottingham's *Western Philosophy: An Anthology* Praise for the first edition

'It is difficult to imagine how this volume could be improved upon as the very best historically based anthology of the essential philosophical writings. Cottingham's commentary and introductions are extremely clear and helpful. It will provide an ideal text for an excellent introductory course in philosophy'.

Christopher Hookway, University of Sheffield

'This volume is a superb resource for beginning students and their teachers. Not only is it an excellent anthology – a comprehensive, well-chosen, well-edited collection of classic texts, from Plato to Sartre, Aristotle to Rawls – it is also a perspicuous systematic presentation of the subject, owing to the editor's skilful provision of introductory material and notes. Judiciously annotated lists of supplementary readings further enhance the value of this outstanding volume.'

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'In this anthology the highly respected philosopher John Cottingham has assembled 100 classic selections from Plato to Parfit. Done with care and considerable expertise the result is arguably the best single-volume introduction to the writings of Western philosophy.'

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David Cooper, University of Durham

For JCC and family

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Preface

An anthology can serve many different purposes.

Anthologies of poetry usually leave readers to make their own way, sampling the flowers arranged for their delight. With philosophy things are rather different. Many of the arguments of the great philosophers rest on a daunting array of presuppositions and concealed premises, and careful guidance is needed if many readers are not to be overwhelmed. The texts included in this volume, and the linking passages of introduction and commentary, offer a guided tour through the main branches of the subject, introducing the ideas in sequence, and uncovering the main outlines of that complex interplay of arguments which forms the Western philosophical tradition. The central aim, as with all anthologies, is to put the reader in touch with the texts themselves. Those embarking on the subject can sometimes find it hard even to grasp just what philosophy is, and there is no better way of discovering than to read the writings of the great philosophers at first hand. This volume is designed to present some of the most important extracts from those writings in a way that will enable the individual to achieve a clear overview of how the subject developed, and how the most important theories fit into the overall picture. It is, I hope, a book which individuals will be able to keep by them, for pleasure and profit, as they set out on the quest for philosophical understanding.

The book also has the more specific aim of being serviceable to university students undertaking a formal course of study in philosophy. Philosophy is a wide-ranging subject, and there is no single template for an ideal introductory course (and even if there were, philosophy departments worth their salt would not wish to grind out

exactly the same syllabus year after year). There are many ways into philosophy, and no good reason why one particular branch of the subject should always form the chosen route. One of the objects of this book is to provide, within the compass of a single volume, a set of key introductory materials for the widest possible range of courses, covering all the main branches of the subject (or at least all those suitable for teaching at a basic undergraduate level). Fundamental issues in epistemology are dealt with in [Part I](#) ('Knowledge and Certainty'). [Part II](#) ('Being and Reality') is concerned with general metaphysics and ontology, and [Part III](#) ('Language and Meaning') deals with central philosophical concerns about how language is related to thought and to the world. The philosophy of mind is covered in [Part IV](#) ('Mind and Body'), and the important issues of personal identity and the freedom of the will receive separate treatment in [Part V](#) ('The Self and Freedom'). The philosophy of religion and the philosophy of science are dealt with in [Part VI](#) ('God and Religion') and [Part VII](#) ('Science and Method') respectively. The next two parts deal with moral philosophy: [Part VIII](#) ('Morality and the Good Life') tackles theoretical and systematic issues in normative ethics, while [Part IX](#) ('Problems in Ethics') covers a selection of key issues in applied moral philosophy. [Part X](#) ('Authority and the State') and [Part XI](#) ('Beauty and Art') deal respectively with political philosophy and aesthetics, and, to conclude the volume, [Part XII](#) ('Human Life and its Meaning') covers some of the various ways in which great thinkers, ancient and modern, have tackled the old puzzle of what significance, if any, attaches to human existence.

Although the first three parts of the volume are devoted to epistemology, meta-physics and philosophy of language, traditionally considered as having a 'foundational' role in philosophy, the issues raised here are among the most

demanding in the book, and there is no compelling reason why any given introductory course should have to begin with them. Each part of the volume is intended to be self-contained, and students and teachers are invited to work on the various parts of the book in any order they see fit, or indeed to concentrate on any particular part or parts in isolation. That said, given the nature of philosophy there is inevitably a fair amount of overlap between the topics raised in various parts; where this happens footnotes are provided to draw attention to connections with relevant texts or commentary in other parts of the volume.

The passages of introduction and commentary which link the extracts have been kept as concise and clear as possible. They are, of course, no substitute for the interpretations and evaluations which lecturers and instructors will themselves wish to provide. This book is designed to be serviceable for both teachers and students, not to eliminate the need for hard work by either group. So what is provided here is a basic scaffolding on which courses can be constructed, and a supportive framework for those coming to the texts for the first time. There is always a danger of oversimplification when writing with the principal aim of helping the student reader. Philosophy is not an easy subject, and spoon-feeding is often counterproductive; in the end there is no alternative to readers wrestling with the arguments for themselves. But without a clear initial overview, the whole philosophical enterprise can seem dauntingly obscure. Qualifications, objections, reinterpretations – these can always be added later; but if there is no initial understanding, the enthusiasm for making these further efforts will simply ebb away before any progress has been made.

These points notwithstanding, there may still be some who may have certain reservations about the very idea of introducing students to philosophy by way of an anthology,

as opposed to through the intensive study of complete texts. Those who (like the present writer) were taught by this latter method will know that it has a very great deal to recommend it. Nevertheless, the vast expansion in numbers in tertiary education during the late twentieth century has required many philosophy teachers to rethink their approach. This has been particularly true in the United Kingdom. A typical annual philosophy intake in most British universities used to comprise a relatively small number of students who, even in their first year, could be taught in specialized classes and tutorials. But nowadays introductory classes can run to hundreds, and for groups of this size no library, however well equipped, can furnish enough copies of books and articles to support the traditional tutorial system based on the weekly reading list. Many teachers in Britain have thus had to accept what their counterparts in North America and elsewhere have long taken as given: the need for a single compendious volume of readings which will supply the materials for an entire introductory course in philosophy. Such volumes do not, of course, preclude students from reading more widely (as every good teacher will want to encourage them to do); but they at least ensure that some of the basic textual materials are to hand.

Although the volume is a stout one, the constraints of space are nevertheless such that many hard choices have been necessary. To begin with, this is a collection based on 'classic' texts, and this means that only a relatively small percentage of the extracts are taken from the work of philosophers from the recent past. To have given a representative selection of today's proliferating philosophical theories and debates would have required virtually an entire volume corresponding to each of the divisions of the present book. The classic materials featured here are nevertheless designed to provide a good

base for understanding more recent developments, and the commentary accompanying each part of the volume often includes brief glances forward to later theories. Even within the terms of its chosen framework, however, the selection presented here cannot make any claim to completeness: the schema of twelve extracts in each of the twelve parts yields that pleasingly duodecimal aggregate traditionally termed a 'gross' (which gives the book a considerably wider scope than most recent anthologies); but I am well aware of the very many candidates for inclusion that have had to be omitted. If specialists, turning to their chosen authors, are shocked by the brevity of the extracts, or the severity of the abridgements, I can only plead that they bear in mind that nothing in the present project is designed to stop students going on to make a more detailed and thorough study of the authors represented here. On the contrary, it is my earnest hope that students who might have been overwhelmed by stern injunctions to read 'all or nothing' will be sufficiently excited by some of the extracts here to turn to the full texts, and to the suggestions for further reading which are provided at the end of each Part.

As well as the abridging noted in the previous paragraph, in preparing the extracts for inclusion in this volume I have not hesitated to modify spelling, punctuation and layout to make the material more readily accessible to the modern reader. It is of course vital that critical editions should preserve the original texts for scholarly use, but the aims of an anthology such as this are rather different; and since so many long-dead Greek, Latin, French and German writers are in any case presented here in modern English translations, it seemed over-exacting to insist on antiquated spelling and grammar just for those philosophers who wrote in English. I did indeed at one point consider 'translating' the extracts from such writers as Locke and

Hume (that is, providing completely new modern English versions), but in the end (despite the urgings of some colleagues) resisted this radical measure, contenting myself instead with a few minor modifications of phrasing in places where the original was so antique that it might pose a major obstacle to the modern student reader. Some will feel I have not gone far enough; others will no doubt express outrage that a single comma has been altered. Bearing in mind, as always, the readership for whom this book is intended, I have tried to follow an Aristotelian mean between opposing culinary vices: my aim has been to avoid making the fare either blandly over-processed or harshly indigestible.

As for the principles of selection, since it would be impossibly ponderous to defend each decision, chapter and verse, I will simply observe that one overarching aim has been to try to make sure that the materials within each Part of the volume hang together as far as possible; rather than leaving readers to sink or swim, as is often done, I have tried to guide them through the extracts, linking the ideas together, so that by the end of each Part they should be able to move towards achieving a coherent, if necessarily schematic, overview of the relevant branch of the subject. Further details of the plan of the book may be found in the 'Guidance for Readers and Format of the Volume' (pp. xxviii–xxx, below).

I am very grateful to the publishers and individual authors and translators named in the footnotes at the start of each extract for permission to reproduce the materials indicated. Further details are given in the Acknowledgements (pp. xxi–xxvii, below). (In a number of cases, the translations from the original Greek, Latin, French and German texts are my own.) As noted above, for the purposes of the present volume it has been necessary to abridge some of the extracts, and in the interests of clarity or consistency I

have sometimes modified the original spelling and punctuation, and made occasional minor changes in phrasing. Further details may be found in the footnotes accompanying each extract. Finally, I should like to acknowledge here the wealth of helpful advice I have received from friends and colleagues in the course of preparing this volume. I am especially grateful to John Ackrill, John Andrews, Doug Buchanan, Edmund Burke, Harley Cahen, Enrique Chávez-Arviso, Max de Gaynesford, Hanjo Glock, John Haldane, Brad Hooker, Andrew Mason, Richard Norman, David Oderberg, Derek Parfit, Harry Parkinson, John Preston, Michael Proudfoot, Steve Smith, Sandy Stewart, Jim Stone, Mark Tebbit and Rosemary Wright. I am greatly indebted to Enrique Chávez-Arviso for checking the 'Notes on the Philosophers', and for preparing the index.

Preface to the Second Edition

The original edition of 1996 contained ten Parts of ten extracts each. All the material that appeared in the first edition has been retained in full, but the volume has been substantially enlarged for this second edition.

In the first place, each of the existing Parts now contains two additional extracts, bringing the total number of extracts per Part to twelve instead of ten. The decision to use more modern material for these further extracts was relatively easy, not just because many philosophers and students find a special excitement in more recent developments, but also because philosophy is a living and constantly evolving subject, and it is important for those studying the Western philosophical tradition to be aware that it continues to develop. The roots and trunk of the old plant are immensely valuable in themselves, but also because they put forth fresh shoots. That said, the selection

of the new, more recent, materials was far from easy, since unlike the great classics of the past, they have yet to prove their enduring worth; what is more, today's philosophers are notoriously at odds about the relative importance of the proliferating current trends in the subject. I cannot hope to please everyone, but I have tried to select pieces that, firstly, will give some sense of where each of the respective branches of the subject is going, and, secondly, will stand some comparison with their august predecessors – either because since publication they have already achieved something of the status of instant classics, or else because they are at least worthy representatives of distinctive strands of philosophical inquiry that seem likely to endure.

As well as augmenting the existing Parts of the volume, I have also included two completely new Parts, each of twelve items, which (as noted above in the main Preface) brings the total number of extracts in the book as a whole to 144, in place of the original hundred. Dividing the spoils equally between 'theoretical' and 'practical' philosophy (to use a classification commonly employed in Philosophy departments in continental Europe), I have devoted these two new sections of the book to Philosophy of Language, and to the Meaning of Life respectively. The former is a subject that forms a vitally important part of the Western philosophical tradition, and one that many readers of the first edition expressed a strong interest in seeing included in any revised volume; the latter relates to one of philosophy's oldest and most weighty preoccupations, eclipsed under the restrictive conception of philosophical inquiry that became fashionable around the middle of the twentieth century, but now happily reinstated.

I am most grateful to those many philosophical colleagues from around the world who were kind enough to let me know that they found the first edition of the book useful, and I am heavily indebted to a large number of friends and

colleagues for invaluable suggestions about the composition of this new edition, and/or for comments on the new material. Particular thanks are due to Michaela Baker, Jonathan Dancy, Max de Gaynesford, Brian Feltham, Philip Goff, Brad Hooker, John Hyman, Ward Jones, Seán MacGiollarnath, David Oderberg, John Preston, Severin Schroeder, Philip Stratton-Lake, Daniel Whiting and Andrew Williams. Emma Borg was kind enough to cast an expert eye over the draft of [Part III](#), and made many valuable suggestions for improvement, and Joseph Jedwab kindly did the same for [Part VI](#), and Andrew Williams for [Part X](#). I have a special debt to Javier Kalhat, whose judicious advice was an enormous help to me, and who also provided unstinting assistance in hunting down the relevant materials and making suggestions for abridgement. Bryan Weaver provided much appreciated help with the additions to [Part IX](#). Finally, I should like to express my thanks to Nick Bellorini, the Commissioning Editor at Blackwell Publishers, for encouraging me to produce this second edition, and to all the members of the editorial and production team for their hard work and efficiency.

JC
Reading, England
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Preface to the Third Edition

Philosophy is not an easy subject, and the appearance of a third edition of this anthology has provided the opportunity to increase the amount of help and advice included for the benefit of students and other readers. In response to many requests, I have added, at the start of the volume, an introductory essay which offers advice on how to set about reading a philosophical text and how to write about it.

There are no quick and easy formulas in philosophy, but I hope at least some of those using this anthology as a course text will find this essay helpful. In addition, the opportunity has been taken to revise and substantially augment the suggested further readings and sample questions accompanying the texts. Instead of a brief list of readings at the end of each part of the volume, each of the 144 individual extracts is now followed by several specimen questions designed to focus on some of the key philosophical problems raised by the excerpt, together with a list of readings related to the specific text in question. A particular point has been made of including references to online resources which give the student quick access to helpful critical and exegetical guidance.¹

Probably no two philosophers will agree on the ideal selection of texts for an anthology of this kind, and a survey the publishers conducted of current users of the second edition produced a wide variety of suggestions for alternative texts that might be included. Though I was wary of making any wholesale changes, I have as a result introduced a small number of changes to the texts chosen for this third edition, in order to fill some gaps; but reluctance to make what was already a fairly bulky volume more unwieldy decided me to make substitutions rather than additions, and I have retained the basic framework adopted for the second edition (twelve parts each of twelve sections). The overall character of the anthology has been preserved, with preference nearly always given to texts that have stood the test of time, as opposed to more recent offerings that may be attracting current interest, but whose long-term place in the canon of Western philosophy cannot yet be said to be secure.

I am grateful to several members of the team at Wiley for encouraging me to undertake the revisions for this third edition, and to many friends and colleagues who have been