Analytic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction
Michael Beaney

Analytic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction introduces some of the key ideas of the founders of analytic philosophy—Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Susan Stebbing around the turn of the 20th century—by exploring certain fundamental philosophical questions and showing how those ideas can be used in offering answers. Considering the work of Susan Stebbing, it also explores the application of analytic philosophy to critical thinking, and emphasizes the conceptual creativity that lies at the heart of fruitful analysis. Throughout, this VSI illustrates why clarity of thinking, precision of expression, and rigour of argumentation are rightly seen as virtues of analytic philosophy.

Ancient Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction
Julia Annas

Ancient Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction introduces ancient debates and focuses on important and revealing features of the subject providing a sense of its freshness and liveliness, and of its wide variety of themes and styles. The tradition of ancient philosophy is a long, rich and varied one, in which a constant note is that of discussion and argument. What did ancient philosophers think about the conflict of reason and emotion within man? Are there any subjects that engaged the minds of ancient philosophers that do not concern their modern counterparts? What can we learn from the thoughts of the ancient philosophers?

Animal Rights: A Very Short Introduction
David DeGrazia
Animal Rights: A Very Short Introduction explores the implications for how we should treat animals in connection with our diet, zoos, and research. Most people are opposed to cruelty and sense that animals have moral significance. At the same time, traditional views that sanction animal use with few constraints have heavily influenced beliefs and everyday practices. How should we understand the moral status of animals vis-à-vis human beings? Do animals have moral rights? If so, what does this mean? What kinds of beings are animals, what sorts of mental lives do they have, and how should we understand welfare?

Beauty: A Very Short Introduction

Roger Scruton

Beauty: A Very Short Introduction explores the concept of beauty, asking what makes an object — either in art, in nature, or the human form — beautiful. It strongly refutes the notion that judgements of beauty are purely subjective and relative, and that we can learn little from art criticism and study. Arguing that our experience of beauty is rationally founded, and that beauty is a real and universal value, this VSI shows how our sense of beauty has an indispensable part to play in the way we shape our world.

Causation: A Very Short Introduction

Stephen Mumford and Rani Lill Anjum

Causation is the most fundamental connection in the universe. Without it, there would be no science or technology. There would be no moral responsibility either, as none of our thoughts would be connected with our actions and none of our actions with any consequences. Any intervention we make in the world around us is premised on there being causal connections that are, to a degree, predictable. It is causation that is at the basis of prediction and also explanation. Causation: A Very Short Introduction introduces the key theories of causation and also the surrounding debates and controversies.

Conscience: A Very Short Introduction

Paul Strohm

Conscience: A Very Short Introduction highlights what the particularly European concept of conscience has meant to successive generations and why it has a reputation as one of the most significant Western contributions to human rights and human dignity. In the West,
conscience has been relied upon for 2,000 years as a judgement that distinguishes right from wrong. It has effortlessly moved through every period division and timeline between the ancient, medieval, and modern. The Romans identified it, the early Christians appropriated it, and Reformation Protestants and loyal Catholics relied upon its advice and admonition. Today it is embraced with equal conviction by non-religious and religious alike.

Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction
Simon Critchley

Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction shows that Continental philosophy encompasses a distinct set of philosophical traditions and practices, with a compelling range of problems often ignored by the analytic tradition. It discusses the ideas and approaches of philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Habermas, Foucault, and Derrida, and introduces key concepts such as existentialism, nihilism, and phenomenology by explaining their place in the Continental tradition. It discusses the reasons for the conflict between Continental and Anglo-American philosophy, and argues that philosophers should now attempt to overcome this divide.

Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction
Stephen Eric Bronner

Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction explores the concepts and themes that distinguished critical theory from its more traditional philosophical competitors. Critical theory emerged in the 1920s from the work of the Frankfurt School, the circle of German–Jewish academics who sought to diagnose and cure the ills of society. Sketches of leading representatives of this critical tradition, such as Georg Lukács and Ernst Bloch, Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas, as well as many of its seminal texts and empirical investigations, are presented. Concepts such as method and agency, alienation and reification, the culture industry and repressive tolerance, non-identity, and utopia are explained and discussed.

Derrida: A Very Short Introduction
Simon Glendinning
Derrida: A Very Short Introduction explores both the difficulty and significance of the work of Derrida. It explains the theory of deconstruction, presenting Derrida's challenging ideas as a significant contribution to and a powerful reading of, our philosophical heritage. Defending Derrida against many of the charges that were levelled against him by the analytical philosophical community, this VSI nevertheless shows why his work inspires such passionate criticism. It explores his most famous and influential texts to show how and why Derrida's work of deconstruction is inspired not by a ‘critical frenzy’, but by a loving respect for philosophy.

Descartes: A Very Short Introduction
Tom Sorell
Print Publication Year: 2000 Published Online: Sep 2013
DOI: 10.1093/actrade/9780192854094.001.0001
Item type: book

Descartes: A Very Short Introduction explores the life and work of a man who made fundamental contributions to physics, mathematics, and optics, and reported useful observations in meteorology and physiology. Had he confined himself to the natural sciences, his achievement would have been remarkable enough. But his range was considerably wider. His famous statement Cogito, ergo sum is the first principle of his metaphysics, his theory of what has to be known for stable and exact science to be possible. This VSI shows that Descartes was, essentially, an advocate and practitioner of a new mathematical approach to physics, and that he developed his metaphysics to support his scientific programme.

The Enlightenment: A Very Short Introduction
John Robertson
Print Publication Year: 2015 Published Online: Sep 2015
DOI: 10.1093/actrade/9780199591787.001.0001
Item type: book

A foundational moment in the history of modern European thought, the Enlightenment continues to be a reference point for philosophers, scholars, and opinion-formers. Enlightenment: A Very Short Introduction offers a concise historical introduction to the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement of eighteenth-century Europe. Discussing its intellectual achievements, it also explores how its supporters exploited new ways of communicating their ideas to a wider public, creating a new ‘public sphere’ for critical discussion of the moral, economic, and political issues facing their societies. But what is the relationship between the historical Enlightenment and the idea of ‘Enlightenment’, and can these two understandings be reconciled?
Environmental Ethics: A Very Short Introduction
Robin Attfield

Environmental ethics studies the values and principles involved in combating environmental problems such as pollution, loss of species and habitats, and climate change. Environmental Ethics: A Very Short Introduction traces the discipline’s origins and considers how it defends the independent value of living creatures and the need to make decisions informed by the needs and interests of future generations. Exploring the diverse approaches to ethical decisions and judgements, it highlights the importance of making production and consumption sustainable, and of addressing human population levels, together with policies for preserving species, sub-species, and their habitats. It also discusses the different social and political movements involved and considers the environmental attitudes of the world’s religions.

Epicureanism: A Very Short Introduction
Catherine Wilson

Epicureanism is commonly associated with a carefree view of life and the pursuit of pleasures, particularly of the table. However, it was a complex and distinctive system of philosophy that emphasized simplicity and moderation. Epicureanism: A Very Short Introduction explains the key ideas, comparing them with those of the rival Stoics and with Kantian ethics, and tracing their influence on the development of scientific and political thought from Locke, Newton, and Galileo to Rousseau, Marx, Bentham, and Mill. It discusses the adoption and adaptation of Epicurean motifs in science, morality, and politics from the 17th century onwards, and contextualizes the significance of Epicureanism in modern life.

Ethics: A Very Short Introduction
Simon Blackburn

Our self-image as moral, well-behaved creatures is dogged by scepticism, relativism, hypocrisy, and nihilism, by the fear that in a Godless world science has unmasked us as creatures fated by our genes to be selfish and tribalistic, or competitive and aggressive. Ethics: A Very Short Introduction tackles the major moral questions surrounding birth, death, happiness, desire, and freedom, showing us how we should think about the meaning
of life, and how we should mistrust the soundbite-sized absolutes that often dominate moral debates.

**Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction**

Thomas Flynn

Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction examines one of the leading philosophical movements of the twentieth century. Focusing on its seven leading figures: Sartre, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, de Beauvoir, Merleau–Ponty, and Camus, this VSI considers the key themes of the movement, which emphasized individuality, free will, and personal responsibility in the modern world. Drawing on the movement's varied relationships with the arts, humanism, and politics, it clarifies the philosophy and original meaning of ‘existentialism’ — which has tended to be obscured by misappropriation. By placing the philosophy in its political context, this VSI highlights the continuing relevance of existentialism.

**Foucault: A Very Short Introduction**

Gary Gutting

Foucault: A Very Short Introductions explores the highlights of Foucault's life and thoughts on literature, in particular the avant-garde scene; his philosophical and historical work; his treatment of knowledge and power in modern society; and his thoughts on sexuality. Foucault was one of those rare philosophers who became a cult figure. From aesthetics to the penal system, from madness and civilization to avant-garde literature, Foucault was happy to reject old models of thinking and replace them with versions that are still widely debated today. A major influence on Queer Theory and gender, he also wrote on architecture, history, law, medicine, literature, politics, and of course philosophy.

**Free Speech: A Very Short Introduction**

Nigel Warburton

Free Speech: A Very Short Introduction examines the liberal assumption that free speech is worth preserving at any cost and offers a guide to important questions facing modern society about the value and limits of free speech. Where should a civilized society draw the line? Should we be free to offend other people's religion? Are there good grounds for
censoring pornography? Has the Internet changed everything? ‘I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it’. This slogan, attributed to Voltaire, is frequently quoted by defenders of free speech. Yet it is rare to find anyone prepared to defend all expression in every circumstance, especially if the views expressed incite violence.

Free Will: A Very Short Introduction
Thomas Pink

Free Will: A Very Short Introduction asks: Are our choices really free? Every day we seem to make and act upon all kinds of free choices. Are these choices ours, or are we compelled to act the way we do by factors beyond our control? Is the feeling that we could have made different decisions just an illusion? And if our choices are not free, why should we be held morally responsible for our actions? This VSI looks at a range of issues surrounding this fundamental philosophical question, exploring it from the ideas of the Greek and medieval philosophers through to the thoughts of present-day thinkers.

German Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction
Andrew Bowie

German Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction discusses the idea that that German philosophy forms one of the most revealing responses to the problems of ‘modernity’, addressing questions such as the relationships between knowledge and faith, reason and emotion, and scientific, ethical, and artistic ways of seeing the world. It examines Germany’s transition from a traditional feudal society to a modern, industrialized one, exploring how philosophy relates to social and historical developments. All the significant thinkers of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries are examined, as well as some of the lesser-known philosophers.

God: A Very Short Introduction
John Bowker

Who or what is God? How can we know God? Many people believe in God; not just throughout history but also in the present day. But who or what is it they believe in? Many different and sometimes conflicting answers have been suggested to this question. God: A
Very Short Introduction explores some of the answers provided by philosophers, poets, and theologians, and considers why some people believe in God and others do not. It considers how each major religion established their own distinctive beliefs about God and how they each interpret His existence, and concludes by looking at how our understanding of God continues to evolve.