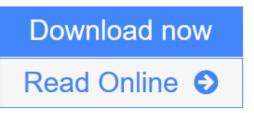


## A History of Philosophy, Vol. 7: Modern Philosophy, from the Post-Kantean Idealists to Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche

Frederick Charles Copleston



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Conceived originally as a serious presentation of the development of philosophy for Catholic seminary students, Frederick Copleston's nine-volume *A History Of Philosophy* has journeyed far beyond the modest purpose of its author to universal acclaim as the best history of philosophy in English.

Copleston, an Oxford Jesuit of immense erudition who once tangled with A. J. Ayer in a fabled debate about the existence of God and the possibility of metaphysics, knew that seminary students were fed a woefully inadequate diet of theses and proofs, and that their familiarity with most of history's great thinkers was reduced to simplistic caricatures. Copleston set out to redress the wrong by writing a complete history of Western philosophy, one crackling with incident and intellectual excitement -- and one that gives full place to each thinker, presenting his thought in a beautifully rounded manner and showing his links to those who went before and to those who came after him.

The result of Copleston's prodigious labors is a history of philosophy that is unlikely ever to be surpassed. *Thought* magazine summed up the general agreement among scholars and students alike when it reviewed Copleston's *A History of Philosophy* as "broad-minded and objective, comprehensive and scholarly, unified and well proportioned... We cannot recommend [it] too highly."

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#### Ahmad Sharabiani says

A History of Philosophy 7: Modern Philosophy (A History of Philosophy #7), Frederick Charles Copleston A History of Philosophy is an eleven-volume history of Western philosophy written by English Jesuit priest Frederick Charles Copleston. Volume 7: Fichte to Nietzsche: Johann Gottlieb Fichte; Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel; Arthur Schopenhauer; Karl Marx; Søren Kierkegaard; Friedrich Nietzsche.

#### globulon says

I've read the introduction to and most of the 3 chapters on Hegel in this volume.

The introduction is definitely interesting and worthwhile. He does a comparison/contrast with German Romanticism which I thought was helpful. He also gives a great discussion about how German Idealism as a whole can be seen as a result of Kant's work. These two historical narratives do a lot to make many of the common assumptions of the 3 main figures (Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel) clear and more comprehensible (particularly if you have studied Kant).

On the whole I found the material that is more specifically focused on Hegel to be useful as well. It is obviously and abridged account as it must be. It's a good next step from something like Singer's "very short introduction". Copleston raises more issues and is more interested in trying to give a philosophically defensible account of Hegel's philosophy even if it is meant for the student. He is clear though and his it is a

thought provoking account. He is a sincere mind and takes the thinkers he writes about seriously. He clearly has a bit of a soft spot for Hegel but I'm not sure that's based on agreement.

On the other hand it's interesting to read this next to Marcuse. I feel both of them are sincere, serious scholars. That is I believe them to both have intellectual honesty and integrity. On the other hand they do have their respective points of view. So in Marcuse, the social is stressed. Part of the that obviously has to to with the subject of the book, but overall there is a definite "left Hegelian" Marxist emphasis. On the other hand, with Copleston, there is an emphasis on theological questions. Just as Marcuse wants you to see how radical Hegel was (as opposed to the right-Hegelian conservative approach) Copleston wants you to see how theologically minded Hegel was. Again, this isn't dishonesty at all in my opinion. It just exemplifies the way that interpretation works. The two serve as very useful counterpoints to eachother for exactly this reason. They both are attempting to interpret Hegel in a way that is fair to Hegel, but they both have differing interests and feelings about him.

#### **Doutor Branco says**

A very compendious, but very efficient historical narrative.

#### James F says

This is the first volume of Copleston's *History* that I hadn't previously read when I was studying philosophy in college. The volume covers German philosophy of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. More than half the book is devoted to the three major post-Kantian Idealists, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and their more important disciples. Trying to understand Idealist philosophy for me is nearly impossible -- it makes my brain hurt, and I would gladly skip over this entire tendency if it weren't for the influence of Hegel on Marx and thereby on much of twentieth century philosophy. Copleston has the advantage over me here that to him as a Catholic philosopher the idea of Absolute Spirit means something, even if not what it does to Hegel. He explains these philosophies about as clearly as I think they could be explained.

The book then turns to the critics and opponents of Hegel. The neo-Kantians, and some thinkers who continued non-Kantian traditions, get one chapter; Schopenhauer gets two, there is one on the "Young Hegelians", and one on Marx (not surprisingly, this is the weakest chapter in the entire series so far; about all I can say is that he is as fair to Marx as a Catholic priest before the era of "Liberation theology" could be). Then he turns to the more existential tradition, with a chapter on Kierkegaard, one on "non-dialectical materialism" (also weak), and two on Nietzsche. The book ends up with a brief discussion of some twentieth century German philosophers who to some extent continued the traditions discussed in the book (the neo-Kantian Cassirer, the phenomenologists Husserl and Heidegger).

If I had reviewed this in the Image edition which broke it up into two parts, I would have given the first half a much higher rating than the second; Copleston understands the idealists better than he does the materialists, perhaps because that's where his sympathies lie. Not the best book in the series.

#### **Steve Dotson says**

Follows up on previous assertions that Kant is the main influence in German Idealism, and how it leads to Hegel, then breaks away from German Idealism. One of the main divergence points for the array of Philosophers covered is just how much they are convinced the human mind can or cannot grasp beyond the infinite, is the finite indicative of the infinite and reconciling Metaphysics with the emerging enlightenment or keeping it separate. The Author is not expecting the reader to know more than the basic terms of Philosophy, an easy overview.

#### **Nick Smith says**

I decided to read this seventh volume, as I had an interest in the intellectual period of German romanticism, or the "Aufkerlung." This is when Hegel played a decisive role. If you think he did not, you should know that Marx, his follower, changed both East and West in our world. And there is no denying that Marx was a Hegelian.

I was particularly fascinated by Copleston's writing. While he is obviously writing to illustrate the history of philosophy to theological students, who are largely expected to study philosophy rather diligently, he also can serve to "clear up" a great deal of information for the layman. I liked it so much, that I went out and bought the fourth, fifth, and sixth volumes, so now I can travel back to the time of Descartes, who remarked, "I think, therefore I am," and trace the growth of philosophy through Pascal, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Montesquieu, Volataire, Rousseau, Wolff, and the hard-to-read Kant. After all this reading, I am so glad that I picked this book up. I bought it at a used bookstore. I was amazed that all seven volumes were unpurchased, but then I remembered that the demand for them in my area might be described as "minimal." I, however, was pleasantly surprised, and I recommend the book for others interested in the history of philosophy. For me, I love it and always have, from young adult days onward. Really enjoyable reading. Five stars!

#### **Dave Peticolas says**

#### James says

I own this whole set and have profitably read parts of it from time to time. But since 19th c. German philosophy was an area I knew very little about, I decided to read this whole volume.

As usual, Copleston interestingly provides good and thorough overviews of different philosophers throughout. He makes incredibly intricate and difficult philosophical positions very understandable. And though this volume (like the rest in the set) is primarily historical in detail, Copleston also provides various helpful critiques and analyses throughout.

One think that I especially appreciated about this volume was the last chapter. Though German idealism has for the most part faded, and is something of an object of scorn and ridicule, Copleston makes the case in this last chapter for the ongoing value of studying such outlandish philosophical systems and (at least indirectly) encourages that such courageous moves within philosophy should still be attempted today. Though such systems have their faults, Copleston makes the convincing case that their ongoing value is how much they inspire us to think in adventurous and profitable ways.

Like the rest of the series, this volume was excellent and I recommend reading this whole of it for those who are interested in knowing the details of thinkers like Schelling, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. I highly recommend this book!

#### **Keith says**

Nietzsche -- Over the years, I've probably read this entire set. This time I read the sections on Nietzsche since I was also reading Beyond Good and Evil. Copleston provides an excellent overview of Nietzsche in a style that is clear and easy to read. He does an excellent job explaining the philosopher's many contradictory elements.

#### Albie says

History of Philosophy, Volume 7 (Modern Philosophy) by Frederick Copleston (1994)