

Introduction

History of Western Philosophy is a 1945 book by British philosopher [Bertrand Russell](#) (1872–1970). A survey of [Western philosophy](#) from the [pre-Socratic](#) philosophers to the early 20th century, each major division of the book is prefaced by an account of the historical background necessary to understand the currents of thought it describes.^[1] When Russell was awarded the [Nobel Prize in Literature](#) in 1950, *A History of Western Philosophy* was cited as one of the books that won him the award.

The book was written during the [Second World War](#), having its origins in a series of lectures on the [history of philosophy](#) that Russell gave at the [Barnes Foundation](#) in [Philadelphia](#) during 1941 and 1942. Much of the historical research was done by Russell's third wife [Patricia](#). In 1943, Russell received an advance of \$3000 from the publishers, and between 1940 and 1943 he wrote the book while living mainly in [Pennsylvania](#). The book was published in 1945 in the US and a year later in the United Kingdom. It was reset as a 'new edition' in 1961, but no new material was added. Corrections and minor revisions were made to printings of the British first edition and for 1961's new edition; no corrections seem to have been transferred to the American edition (even Spinoza's birth year remains wrong).

The work is divided into three books, each of which is subdivided into chapters; each chapter generally deals with a single philosopher, school of philosophy, or period of time.

Ancient Philosophy

- The [Pre-Socratics](#) (including [Thales](#), [Pythagoras](#), [Heraclitus](#), [Parmenides](#), [Empedocles](#), [Anaximander](#), [Anaximenes](#), [Anaxagoras](#), [Leucippus](#), [Democritus](#) and [Protagoras](#))
- [Socrates](#), [Plato](#) and [Aristotle](#)
- Ancient Philosophy after Aristotle (including the [Cynics](#), [Sceptics](#), [Epicureans](#), [Stoics](#) and [Plotinus](#))

Catholic Philosophy

- The Fathers (including developments in [Jewish philosophy](#), [Islamic philosophy](#) (which he calls Mohammedan throughout, after the fashion of his time), [St Ambrose](#), [St Jerome](#), [St Augustine](#), [St Benedict](#) and [Pope Gregory the Great](#))
- The Schoolmen (including [John the Scot](#) and [St Thomas Aquinas](#))

Modern Philosophy

- From the [Renaissance](#) to Hume (including [Machiavelli](#), [Erasmus](#), [More](#), [Bacon](#), [Hobbes](#), [Descartes](#), [Spinoza](#), [Leibniz](#), [Locke](#), [Berkeley](#) and [Hume](#))
- From Rousseau to the Present Day (including [Rousseau](#), [Kant](#), [Hegel](#), [Byron](#), [Schopenhauer](#), [Nietzsche](#), the [Utilitarians](#), [Marx](#), [Bergson](#), [William James](#) and [John Dewey](#))
- The last chapter in this section, *The Philosophy of Logical Analysis*, is concerned with Russell's own philosophical views at the time.

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