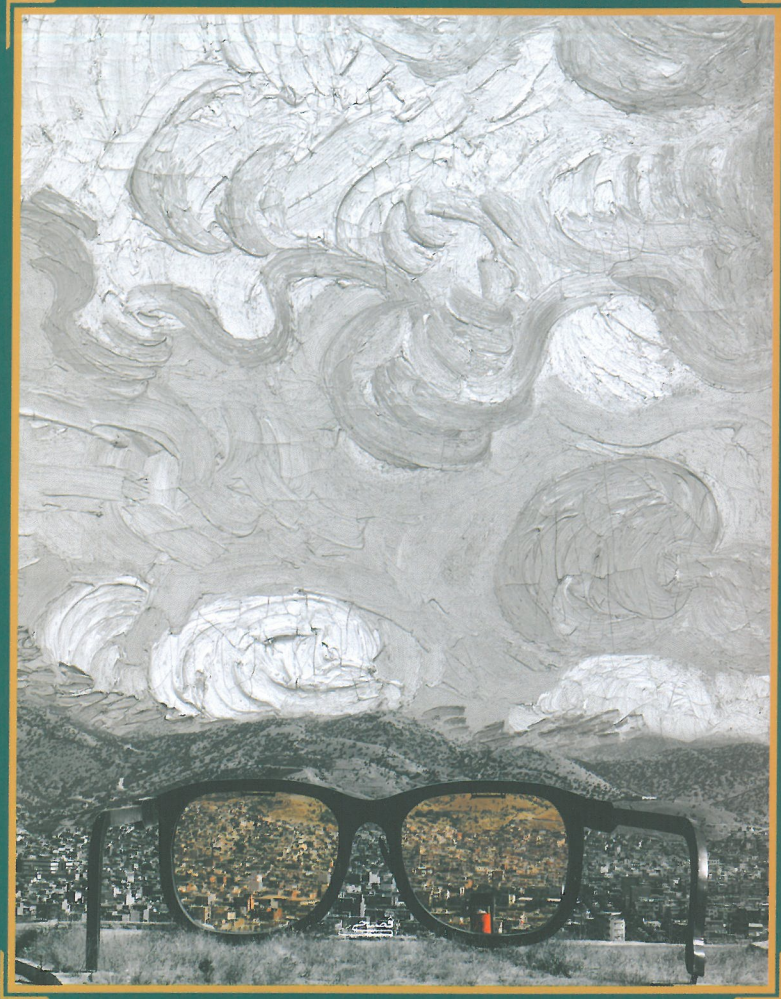


# Selected Philosophical Works

Primary Sources, Basic Concepts, Commentaries, and Quizzes  
A Companion for Undergraduate Students in Philosophy

IV



Hossein Mesbahian

**A Companion for  
Undergraduate Students in  
Philosophy**

**(IV)**

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**Selected Philosophical Works (IV)**  
**Primary Sources, Basic Concepts, Commentaries, and Quizzes**

## **A Companion for Undergraduate Students in Philosophy**

### **Fourth Part:**

#### **Contemporary Period**

**Peirce**

**Russell**

**Wittgenstein**

**Rawls**

**Husserl**

**Heidegger**

**Sartre**

#### **For Undergraduate Courses:**

Interpretation of Philosophical Texts in English IV: Contemporary philosophy

**Hossein Mesbahian**

Department of Philosophy

University of Tehran

**2019**

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## Introduction

This book is based on a documentary DVD containing expert commentary and analyses by leading scholars in philosophy, followed by selected primary sources, basic philosophical concepts and interactive philosophy quizzes. This book has five main aims:

- 1- To draw comprehensive and methodologically appropriate picture of the history of philosophy in the Western world;
- 2- To provide students with an understanding of philosophy in the English language;
- 3- To encourage students to interpret philosophical subjects, to ask fundamental questions about human nature and our world, and to gain critical perspective on philosophical issues;
- 4- To examine historical development of philosophical thought, and an exploration of its relationship with contemporary philosophical issues;
- 5- To encourage students to think about the role philosophy can play in the modern world.

In pursuit of these aims, it is necessary to highlight the importance of the following questions: What is philosophy? What does it mean to philosophize? How can philosophy be studied? It will be suggested that few concepts have come to dominate the human life as much as philosophy, yet there is very little agreement over what the term actually means. Thus, it will become obvious that



philosophy is a controversial concept involved in numerous and frequently inconsistent understandings. Philosophy, as we will explore, is not the same as “life” but on the other hand, almost any other definition would seem too narrow. Although attempts at definition and interpretation of philosophy are certainly important, the study of philosophy often doesn’t begin with a solid definition of the subject. Instead, it seems easier to define philosophy by doing philosophy.

One way of doing philosophy is to explore major points of disagreement among prominent philosophers of history. Examining their positions and the arguments they present in support of them will undoubtedly lay the foundation for the critical insight required in advanced academic research. Not only does philosophy foster our ability to construct and articulate our viewpoints, it also opens our horizon to a plethora of unasked questions about ourselves and our surroundings. Therefore, throughout the historical examination of Western philosophy, we find that the primary feature of doing philosophy is offering critical views that refute a philosopher’s claim, or reveal that some philosophical views are less defensible than others, and some are simply indefensible.

These four volumes begin with pre-Socratic philosophers and ends with the great 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher John Rawls. This volume focuses on contemporary philosophy, from pragmatism to John Rawls. It must be noted that the primary aim of structuring such a wide-ranging course is to provide a very basic conceptual framework of Western philosophy in the English language. In other words, the main purpose of this book is to introduce some fundamental English philosophical concepts related to the

philosophers listed in the course outline, rather than to provide an historical overview of Western philosophy.

Apart from the introductory session, each section of this book is organized in two interrelated parts. The readings begin with a short account of an excerpt academic commentator introducing key figures in the history of Western philosophy (transcript from the DVD), followed by selected primary sources covering the same time period and philosophers featured in the excerpts. The assignments begin with philosophical concepts and ends with an interactive philosophy quiz.

Given that this work is an official textbook for undergraduate courses, conforming to certain guidelines had become necessary. With regard to the overall structure and content of the book, I have followed the mandate of the Ministry of Science Research and Technology requiring all departments of philosophy to offer courses on interpreting texts in ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary philosophy. Similarly, quizzes have been added in order to reflect the overall structure of the educational system in Iran wherein students are required to take a national multiple-choice quiz for applying to graduate school. This book, accordingly, is suitable for students looking for an overview of historically-grounded philosophical thought.

I appreciatively acknowledge the help of Mahdi Kalantari Saghafi. Without his editing skills, this project hardly seems feasible. He helped me with fieldwork and spent many hours proofreading and systematizing the bibliography. A special word of thanks, accordingly, to Mahdi for sharing with me his help, and concern. As a final note, I would also like to thank my son, Ali, the

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critical reflections of whom has undoubtedly improved the quality of the book.

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