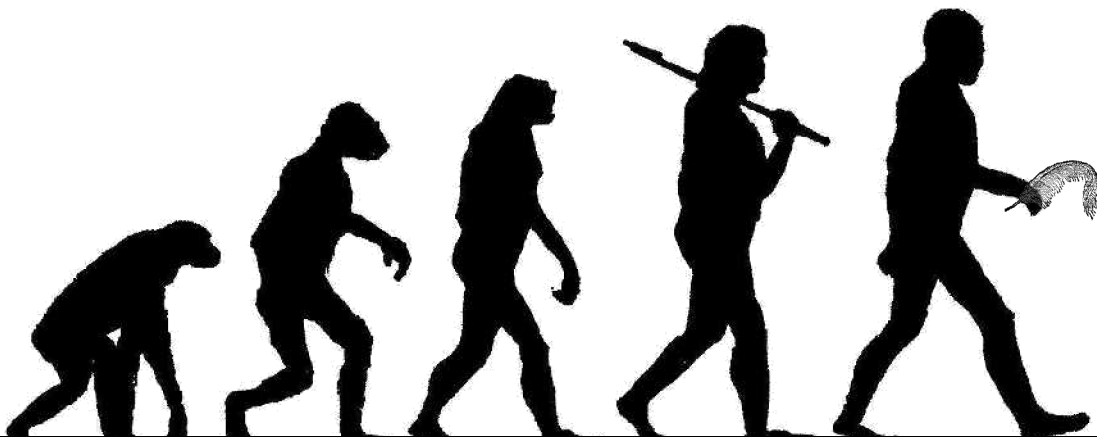


Philos **o** V

I write therefore I am.

E
R
S
E



Vol 1.

Who We Are

Philosophy and poetry are disciplines with well-deserved reputations as superlative modes of expression. Philosophy is admired for its concise and logical argumentation, poetry for its metaphor and emotional evocation. But historically and conceptually they aren't all that far apart. Both aspire to a level more fundamental than that of our daily lives – expressing and exposing what is hidden beneath the surface of everyday concerns.

Plato made no secret of his aversion to verse, but there is a long tradition of thinkers – including Hildegard of Bingen, whose poem *O Spectabiles Viri!* is included in this volume – who have combined the subtle cadence of poetry with the intellectual heft of rational argument. The desire to merge the poetic medium with the pursuit of philosophical investigation is what gave birth to *Philosoverse*.

We welcome you to our first edition.

- The Editors

Andréana Lefton
Avi Patchava
Beth Cherryman

Brian Noone
Maria Rosala

Contents

I. A History of Western Philosophy from Socrates to Sen

Socrates	Kant
Plato	Wollstonecraft
Aristotle	Hegel
St. Augustine	Mill
Descartes	Marx
Hobbes	Nietzsche
Locke	Rawls
Hume	Nozick
Rousseau	Sen

II. Wisdom's Muse: Individual Contributions

Realism, A.E.

On the Morality of Randomized Controlled Trials, Brian Noone

A Limerick for Kant, Jonathan Benn

An Ethics of the Inside, Avi Patchava

III. Master and Muse: A Historical Philosopher-Poet

O Spectabiles Viri! Hildegard of Bingen

A History of Western Philosophy from Socrates to Sen



Given four lines, thirty-two syllables and a rhyme scheme, eighteen philosopher-poets offer their interpretations of the works and lives of eighteen of the most influential thinkers in the history of Western philosophy.

Socrates

c. 480-399 BCE

For Elenchus dialogue¹
Was Plato's love purely Platonic?
For the gadfly heretic,
Whose loving of boys was Byronic.²

- *Kyle Gibbons*

Plato

c. 427-347 BCE

The philosopher is king.
Popper³ is not remembered or learned.⁴
It's not in good form to sing,⁵
And these poems are soon to be burned.

- *Joe Czick*

¹ Synonymous term for the Socratic method. The dialectical process through which Socrates revealed his philosophical insights.

² An amorous Romantic poet famed for his love of women, Lord Byron is also considered a war hero by the Greeks.

³ Karl Popper wrote in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* that Plato's political philosophy is explicitly contrary to a free and decent society.

⁴ Plato believed that knowledge is not learned, but instead remembered from our time amongst the forms.

⁵ Plato believed that all music not promoting the interests of the state should be outlawed.

Aristotle

c. 384-322 BCE

Ethics is like archery
And we're just accidents of matter;⁶
While he was the last of three
Yet unmoved mover of all after.⁷

- *Johannes Himmelreich*

St. Augustine

354-430 CE

Tolle, Lege!⁸ thus he quit
Mani's⁹ cruel Dual for duals of his own:
Man of free will and first sin,
Not fit to topple God's mighty throne.

- *Andrew Simon*

⁶ Archery is an analogy Aristotle uses in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to illustrate the Golden Mean; accidents of matter refers to Aristotle's conception of metaphysics, explaining changes in objects over time.

⁷ The unmoved mover is argument from Aristotelian metaphysics that there must be an originator of causality.

⁸ In *Confessions* Augustine writes that a voice came to him and spoke the words "tolle, lege" (take up and read). This experience was an important part of his conversion to Christianity.

⁹ Mani: the Persian prophet whose writings serve as the basis for Manichaeism, the Gnostic religion which Augustine accepted and later rejected.

René Descartes

1596-1650

Candle snuffed out – tiresome night
Quill is going numb... in hand and line¹⁰
I doubt my hearing – touch – sight
I'm now a sceptic – entrenched by wine!¹¹

- Greg Lewicki

Thomas Hobbes

1588-1679

*Never succumb to what your
Capricious states of nature decree
Render your sovereignty up
To Thomas Hobbes, or, failing that, me!*

- Ying Shi

¹⁰ *Cogito ergo sum*. In his *First Meditation* ("Meditations on First Philosophy") Descartes doubts the power of the senses: "From time to time I found that the senses deceive and it is prudent never to trust completely those who deceived us even once."

¹¹ *In vino veritas*. Descartes philosophizes in a beautiful, passionate style, often referring to his surroundings. This information give us a compelling picture of the man, for whom liquors - biographers do not deny this - often served as an inducer of enlightenment.

John Locke

1632-1704

Liberty not licence. Peace.
Money destroyed, now justice dissent.
Judged, though my duty's to God.
So, rulers beware: I must consent!

- *Beth Cherryman*

David Hume

1711-1776

Straying from Metaphysics,
For true empiricism he seeks.
Boast not, thou foolish thinker;
He'll offer you reasons to be meek.

- *Maria Rosala*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

1712-1778

According to ol' Voltaire¹²
Rousseau liked man in the wilderness.
But Jean-Jacques saw man in chains
And just wanted him to take witness.

- Alex Alton

Immanuel Kant

1724-1804

You can't know what is or isn't
And neither can I, ultimately,¹³
But categorical truth
About ethics, yes – evidently.¹⁴

- Brian Noone

¹² Rousseau once sent a copy of his *Social Contract* to Voltaire and Voltaire wrote back to him: "One longs, in reading your book, to walk on all fours..."

¹³ In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argued that we can only experience what is filtered through our mind, the phenomenal world, while what really exists, the noumenal world, remains permanently out of reach.

¹⁴ Calling it the Categorical Imperative, he argued that moral requirements were derivable a priori from rational autonomy.

Mary Wollstonecraft

1759-1797

Does man deserve dignity?

Of course – mark the French Revolution!¹⁵

And just as importantly,

Women do too – a vindication!¹⁶

- *Eva Manon*

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

1770-1831

You ignored the rhetoric.

Moment, negation, master, slave.

Yet your riddle still amazed,

Spirit of history, what do you crave?

- *Gualberto Gómez*

¹⁵ Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) was an avowal of republicanism written in response to Edmund Burke's monarch-friendly *Reflections on a Revolution in France*.

¹⁶ Her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) was one of the first works of feminist philosophy, arguing that most gender inequalities are not innate but the product of women being denied education.

John Stuart Mill

1806-1873

'Tis annus mirabilis¹⁷

On liberty of human species

A one who errs to opine

Does so, as the many, now with ease.¹⁸

- *Avi Patchava*

Karl Marx

1818-1883

Flux is now; not seen before¹⁹

Unite! You have but your chains to lose

Abused too long - change is due

Chickens come home to roost: Their recuse!²⁰

- *Lukas Slothuus*

¹⁷ Mill's *On Liberty* (1859) was published the same year as Darwin's seminal *On the Origin of Species*.

¹⁸ "If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind" - J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*.

¹⁹ "Not seen before" refers to the conviction of Marxists that each revolutionary moment must be the true revolution.

²⁰ "Their recuse" can refer to either the chickens (from *Animal Farm*, Soviet non-urban proletariat) or the bourgeoisie and historical materialism's lack of falsifiability.

Friedrich Nietzsche

1844-1900

I fan the embers. Pity²¹
Men caught like flies in amber, churning
In the sap of dead truths, dead
Gods.²² The Will is a live god. Burning.

- A.E.

John Rawls

1921-2002

Ignorant, behind a veil
Redistributing a world replete
Of justice, utopian
Very worst-off living lives complete.²³

- Blake Heller

²¹ Most of the images in this poem are drawn from scenes or quotes in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

²² Nietzsche is famous for proclaiming that "God is dead," which has been greatly misinterpreted. He was referring to a certain interpretation of god that no longer seemed relevant for the modern age.

²³ Rawls argues that his theory of justice should satisfy two conditions: first that offices and positions are open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second that inequalities "are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle)."

Robert Nozick

1938-2002

From each and to each with choice²⁴

Forms justice in non-patterned theory²⁵

Who are you to forcefully

Distribute my claim to liberty?

- *Bryan Williamson*

Amartya Sen

1933-

Famine's not shortage of food

And there's one million women too few²⁶

Chatterley's not for the prude²⁷

Lo - a prize in Stockholm did ensue.

- *Luc Bovens*

²⁴ An adaptation of Nozick's entitlement theory. The original slogan is: "From each as they choose, to each as they are chosen."

²⁵ Nozick's notion of justice is a non-patterned historical principle. He contended that patterned principles of distributive justice (e.g. utilitarianism, egalitarianism, etc.) were incompatible with individual liberty.

²⁶ Sen coined the term "missing women" in the late 1980s to describe the large number of women in the world who are not alive due to family neglect or discrimination.

²⁷ In *Choice, Welfare and Measurement* (1982) Sen discusses the impossibility of the 'Paretian liberal' in a now famous example involving the book *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Realism

in the manner of Willem Kalf, 1619-1693

Of the five-and-twenty coins that went to buy
an apothecary's cobalt

three of them were spared to buy
the lemon.

How and from whom he bought
– or borrowed –

such other curiosities:

the nautilus, for one,
the silver basin and kilim –

I'd like to know,
though it seems

inconsequent.

The knife he used was pearl-handled,
the lemon ripe.

And, as he cut himself while peeling,
a drop was left – it stung –

on the underbellied spiral.
He ate a piece of melon and began.

Perfect gold, he thought,
daubed his brush to mimic dark and light.

And as he traced the lemon's curve,
a little red – beneath –

he dropped amid the white.

- A.E.

On the Morality of Randomized Controlled Trials

Physicians swear a commencement oath
not to play God, not to harm –
“I will always put my patient first.”
But what comes second, third, fourth?
Ambition in his veins like the best
of us and good at heart
he may think of the community,
he may seek to do his part.

History is full of failed treatments,
early deaths and prolonged pain,
though the risks were known, balanced fairly.
Today, advances need proof
in the stiff guise of an RCT:
cause and effect, it's presumed,
accessible through symmetric tests –
have they forgotten their Hume?

An infinite series would suffice,
but trials of course are finite
and the subjects are you and me.
A coin flip, a roll of dice:
I am the control, you the trial.
Fine for mice – but not us both.
Hard to trust a doctor whose science
outweighs his patients and his oath.

- *Brian Noone*

A Limerick for Kant

He lived his life in Königsberg,
Cerebrally speaking, above-the-herd,
A legendary teacher,
An indefatigable preacher,
Of the philosophy from which he was spurred.

T'was known for his orderly routine,
Clocks set for when he had been,
Till he got caught in the thrill,
Of Rousseau's "Emile",
Went missing and so couldn't be seen.

The moral law he did befriend,
Treat not as a means but an end,
His life was free,
Through chastity,
For the categorical imperative couldn't bend.

He awoke from his dogmatic slumber,
The analytic and synthetic discombered,
For the bounds of reason,
Certainly did please him,
For his thoughts shall never be outnumbered.

- *Jonathan Benn*

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was a philosopher, scientist, theologian, composer, artist, and poet – a multi-hyphenated woman who managed to walk both between and within the worlds of reason and faith.

O Spectabiles Viri!

Spectacular men! you see
with the spirit's eyes,
piercing the veil.
In a luminous shade you proclaim
a sharp living brightness
that buds from a branch
that blossomed alone
when the radical light took root.

Holy ones of old! you foretold
deliverance for the souls
of exiles
slumped in the dead lands.

Like wheels you
spun round in wonder as you spoke
of the mysterious mountain
at the brink of heaven
that stills many waters, sailing
over the waves.

And a shining lamp
burned in the midst of you!
Pointing,
he runs to the mountain.

Contributors

*Alex Alton
Jonathan Benn
Luc Bovens
Beth Cherryman
Joe Czick
A.E.
Kyle Gibbons
Gualberto Gómez
Blake Heller
Johannes Himmelreich*

*Greg Lewicki
Eva Manon
Brian Noone
Avi Patchava
Maria Rosala
Ying Shi
Andrew Simon
Lukas Slothuus
Bryan Williamson*

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Professor Luc Bovens and the LSE Philosophy Department for funding this edition; Avi Patchava and Brian Noone for idea generation and dissemination; Andréana Lefton for graphic design. Thanks also to our printer, James Whitcombe at dg3.com

Support Us

Have a great idea for our next edition? Interested in ad space? Comments, submissions, and contributions all welcome!

Find us on **Facebook** or email us at **philosoverse@gmail.com**.

Philos  **VERSE**

Find us at [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/philosoverse)
Email us at philosoverse@gmail.com

