



## Spinoza: A Very Short Introduction

By Roger Scruton

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Father of the Enlightenment and the last guardian of the medieval world, Spinoza made a brilliant attempt to reconcile the conflicting moral and intellectual demands of his epoch and to present a vision of man as simultaneously bound by necessity and eternally free. Ostracized by the Jewish community in Amsterddam to which he was born, Spinoza developed a political philosophy that set out to justify the secular state ruled by a liberal constitution, and a metaphysics that sought to reconcile human freedom with a belief in scientific explanation. Here, Roger Scruton presents a clear and systematic analysis of Spinoza's thought and shows its relevance to today's intellectual preoccupations.

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Once in a while, a publication comes along that on first sight seems oddly out of place but on second viewing is admirably suited to its purpose. This little series of biographical summaries of the thoughts of 24 Western philosophers from Democritus to Derrida is admirable not only for its reasonable price but even more for the intelligence and clarity of the writing. Each volume has been prepared by an expert in the subject, and the result is a series of well-drawn and exceptionally useful pocket-size (4.5 x 7 inches) sketches of major figures in the history of Western thought. The level is such that no special background in philosophy is required to understand the concepts discussed. Each volume also contains a short bibliography, some of which refer to electronic journals or web sites. Most of the individuals chosen for the series come as no surprise, e.g., Descartes, Hegel, Kant, Nietzsche, Locke, Hume, Plato, and Socrates. But there are a few unexpected choices, like Alan Turing and Karl Popper. Although on further consideration, they make more sense. Turing's influence on mathematics and on the development of computers has long been recognized, but his 1936 paper "On Computable Numbers," which appeared in the Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society in 1936-37, influenced studies in the philosophy of mind. Popper's development of the concept of "historicism" in such works as *The Open Society and Its Enemies* and *The Poverty of Historicism* significantly influenced 20th-century political thought. Ultimately, this set should be in every academic and public library as well as many school libraries. A Terry C. Skeats, Bishop's Univ. Lib., Lennoxville, Quebec

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### Review

*Review from previous edition: "...an interesting and provocative guide"--Christian Science Monitor*

"His exposition is beautifully lucid."--*Expository Times*

### About the Author

**Roger Scruton** was Lecturer in Philosophy 1971-79, Reader 1979-85, and Professor of Aesthetics 1985-92 at Birkbeck College, University of London.

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