



*Philosophy in Seven Sentences:  
A Small Introduction to a Vast  
Topic*

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Douglas Groothuis offers an introduction to philosophy with a brief look at seven well-known phrases from seven noted philosophers. He says, "Philosophy is not a closed club or a secret society. Since we can all think about ultimate questions, let us do it."

## Philosophy in Seven Sentences

### 1. "Man is the measure of all things." (Protagoras)

The case against Protagoras comes down to this. If we want to learn anything, if we want to improve as human beings, if we want to condemn the Ted Bundys of the world, if we want any kind of educated taste, if we desire to understand and honor humanity, then we must reject the "man is the measure" theory. Each person is indeed the measurer of some things. Some of them the individual gets right; some of them the individual gets wrong. And in this difference lies all the difference in the world, and even outside of it.

– Excerpt taken from chapter one, "Protagoras"

### 2. "The unexamined life is not worth living." (Socrates)

Socrates uttered his famous phrase "The unexamined life is not worth living" while on trial in Athens, charged with corrupting its youth through his philosophizing. His court oration is one of the most famous of its kind. Few philosophers – or anyone else – have been given the chance to sum up their lives and defend their cause while knowingly on the edge of death. Philosophers have been known to get into trouble, but seldom have been physically martyred for the cause. . . . Socrates was the first philosophical martyr. But why such drastic measures for a humble man who desired knowledge so much that he was willing to follow arguments wherever they lead?

– Excerpt taken from chapter two, "Socrates"

### 3. "Man by nature desires to know." (Aristotle)

How, then, does one go about knowing anyway? A more basic question could not be asked, and all seven of our sentences take this up in one way or another. First, if knowledge is after truth rationally believed, then what is truth itself? In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle famously answered in what is curiously translated in entirely monosyllabic words: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true."

– Excerpt taken from chapter three, "Aristotle"

### 4. "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." (Augustine)

[So wrote] Aurelius Augustine (354-430), later known as Saint Augustine. . . . This simple sentence is more than a psychological description, a philosophical speculation or a dogmatic dictum. On the contrary, it reflects a philosophy of life that came from a remarkable life and a remarkable life of the mind.

– Excerpt taken from chapter four, "Augustine"



**5. "I think, therefore I am." (Descartes)**

Descartes is a man for all seasons and for ages as well, because he addressed the toughest questions of philosophy: How can I know anything? What am I? Can I know there is a God? Whatever one's judgment on this philosopher, his influence is undeniable, and it is no accident that he is known as the father of modern philosophy.

– Excerpt taken from chapter five, "Descartes"

**6. "The heart has reasons, that reason knows nothing of." (Pascal)**

Unfortunately, this remark, like several of Pascal's memorable sentences, it is usually misunderstood, as we will discover. But in its proper context, this sentence cuts to the marrow of thought itself and how we come to know anything.

– Excerpt taken from chapter six, "Pascal"

**7. "The greatest hazard of all, losing one's self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all." (Kierkegaard)**

Kierkegaard would have had little patience with the "I'm spiritual, but not religious" crowd, since that remark reveals that one is not willing to submit to a coherent philosophy or school of religious thought. While Kierkegaard studied the self under a microscope, his burden was not to release human potential or raise self-esteem. Instead, he wanted to make the self cognizant of itself as a self, even if this needs to be done through despair.

– Excerpt taken from chapter seven, "Kierkegaard"

*"These philosophical sentences do not sum the thought of any of the philosophers, for these thinkers are far too deep for that. Nor do the seven sentences aim to summarize the history of philosophy. That would be a pompous and laughable claim...But I claim that philosophical activity can be sparked by just seven sterling sentences – and who knows where it might lead?"*

– Douglas Groothuis



## An Expert in Philosophy and Apologetics

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His articles have been published in professional journals such as *Religious Studies*, *Sophia*, *Theory and Research in Education*, *Philosophia Christi*, *Themelios*, *Think: A Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy*, *Christian Scholar's Review*, *Inquiry* and *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. He has written several books, including *Truth Decay*, *In Defense of Natural Theology* (coeditor), *Unmasking the New Age*, *Jesus in an Age of Controversy*, *Deceived by the Light*, *The Soul in Cyberspace*, and, in the Wadsworth Philosophers Series, *On Pascal* and *On Jesus*.

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Groothuis is a gifted communicator who has the ability to challenge the highest level thinkers while remaining accessible to those who are not as academically inclined. He has spoken and preached on a wide range of topics, and that range expands every year. Some general categories he can address are theistic arguments, attacks on Christianity (the new atheism and similar movements), non-Christian spiritualities, cultural and social criticism, comparative religion, C. S. Lewis, the philosophy of Blaise Pascal, ethics, philosophy of technology, political philosophy, philosophy of jazz, aesthetics and others.