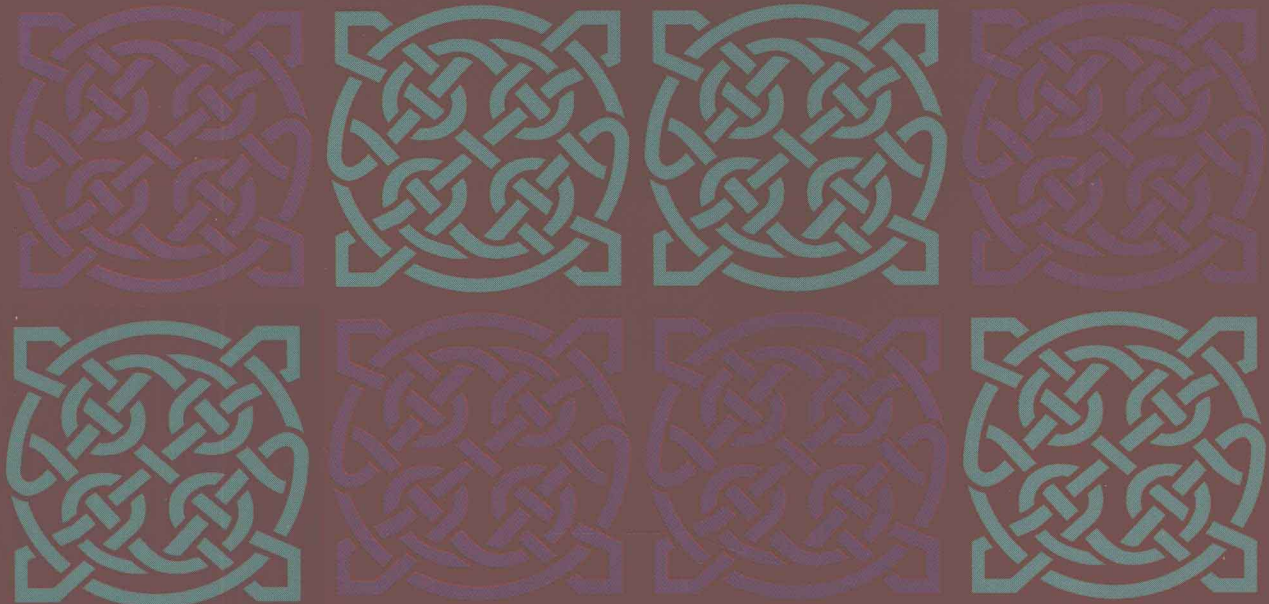


# UNDERSTANDING NON-WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

*Introductory Readings*



Daniel Bonevac

Stephen Phillips



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UNDERSTANDING  
NON-WESTERN  
PHILOSOPHY

*Introductory Readings*

EDITED BY

Daniel Bonevac  
Stephen Phillips

*The University of Texas at Austin*

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# Preface

This book is a collection of classics from non-Western philosophical traditions. The works represented here share many virtues with Western philosophical classics. They have been historically influential, helping to shape entire cultures. Understanding the contemporary world is impossible without some acquaintance with them. Beyond their cultural importance, however, these works are philosophically rich. They overflow with ideas and arguments that shed light on basic issues of philosophy.

Collecting philosophical works from other traditions raises questions about what the basic issues of philosophy are and, indeed, what philosophy itself is. But deciding what to include in a collection for introductory students does not require comprehensive answers to these questions. Non-Western traditions articulate conceptions of meaningful reflection, speculation, and critical inquiry that we have sought to respect. In each tradition (except perhaps Africa), there is an identifiable philosophical literature, a consensus about what the basic problems are, who the great philosophers are, and what works deserve to be considered classics.

Our project also raises the issue of the boundaries of the Western tradition. South and East Asia have continuous, written philosophical traditions that have come into contact with the West only recently. In other parts of the world, however, the boundaries are not so clear. We have classified works as Western or non-Western by appealing to their authors' conceptions of them as continuations of ongoing philosophical traditions. To whom does the author refer? What cultural and, especially, religious influences are explicitly addressed? This criterion has led us to count Latin American philosophy as Western, for Latin American philosophers refer primarily to European sources and see themselves as part of the European philosophical tradition. It has also led us to count Islamic, Jewish, and even some early Christian thought as non-Western. Although these traditions stem from Greek philosophy and interact frequently with Western European philosophy, they focus on a problem whose content is non-European: how to synthesize Greek philosophy and Islam, or Judaism, or an Asian or African understanding of Christianity, into a coherent view of the world. The writers represented here not only wrote mostly in West Asia and northern Africa, in cultures that are in many respects non-Western, but saw themselves as continuing traditions they define largely in terms of the religious texts that they cite frequently for support. We have been swayed by practical considerations as well. The works of Islamic, Jewish, and early Christian philosophers are important to world philosophy, but they have been largely

unavailable to introductory students. We have tried to remedy this, including often-overlooked classics so long as they are arguably non-Western.

The distinction between Western and non-Western traditions breaks down in our selections from the twentieth century. Philosophers as diverse as Kwasi Wiredu, B. K. Matilal, and Keiji Nishitani refer to Western and non-Western sources alike, seeing the concerns of philosophy as universal rather than as bound by a particular culture. We hope that this book will make non-Western sources more readily available to philosophers and students of philosophy working in English.

### *Using This Book*

This book can introduce students to non-Western philosophy or supplement Western readings in an introductory philosophy course. We have arranged the readings by region—Africa, West Asia and the Southern Mediterranean, South Asia, and East Asia. Within each region, we have grouped works that share a philosophical perspective. Within each perspective, we have arranged the works chronologically. Each section, except that on Africa, reflects a reasonably continuous philosophical tradition. Until this century, moreover, interactions between traditions were infrequent. The continuity and relative independence of the traditions makes a regional organization natural.

The readings lend themselves well to other approaches. Some instructors may want to organize the material topically. Others, using this book to supplement readings on Western philosophy, may want to organize the material around the historical progression of the Western philosophical tradition. The following suggests an alignment between various philosophical topics and the philosophical works represented here:

<b>Ethics</b>	Egyptian philosophy, Zera Yacob, Walda Heywat, Saadia, <i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , Sermons of the Buddha, <i>Acaraṅga Sutra</i> , Kumārila, Confucius, Mencius, Hsün Tzu, Lao Tzu, Yang Chu, Mo Tzu, Wang Yang-Ming
<b>Political Philosophy</b>	Fanon, Wiredu, Confucius, Hsün Tzu, Lao Tzu
<b>Human Nature</b>	Philo, Upanishads, <i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , <i>Yogasūtra</i> , <i>Sāṃkhya-kārikā</i> , Buddhaghōṣa, <i>Questions to King Milinda</i> , Śaṅkara, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Mencius, Hsün Tzu
<b>Mysticism</b>	al-Kindi, <i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , <i>Yogasūtra</i> , <i>Surāṅgama Sutra</i> , <i>Muṇḍaka Upanishad</i> , Rūpa Gosvāmī, Vivekananda, Aurobindo
<b>Soul</b>	Egyptian philosophy, Philo, Augustine, <i>Kaṭha Upanishad</i> , <i>Bṛhadāranyaka Upanishad</i> , Vivekananda

Ontology	Philo, Buddhaghosa, Vādi Devasūri, Nāgārjuna, <i>Vaiśeṣika Sūtra</i> , <i>Nyāya-sūtra</i> , Śrīharṣa, Matilal, Hsün Tzu, Wang Fu-chih
The Existence and Nature of God	Philo, Origen, Augustine, Avicenna, al-Farabi, al-Ghazali, Averroës, <i>Kaṭha Upanishad</i> , <i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , Udayana, Ṛg Veda, <i>Brhadāranyaka Upanishad</i> , Sermons of the Buddha, Cārvāka, Śāṅkara, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Vivekananda, Aurobindo
Creation	Philo, Saadia, al-Ghazali, Averroës, Maimonides, <i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , <i>Sāṃkhya-kārikā</i> , Ṛg Veda, <i>Brhadāranyaka Upanishad</i> , <i>Chāndogya Upanishad</i>
Idealism	<i>Surāṅgama Sūtra</i> , Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Śrīharṣa, Hsüan-tsang, Wang Yang-Ming
Nature	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , <i>Sāṃkhya-kārikā</i> , Aurobindo, Nishida, Nishitani
Materialism	Cārvāka, Aurobindo, Wang Ch'ung, Wang Fu-chih
Action	Dharmakīrti, Gaṅgeśa
The Bounds of Language	Vādi Devasūri, Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, Chuang Tzu, Lao Tzu, I-hsüan, Suzuki, Nishitani
Causality	<i>Sāṃkhya-kārikā</i> , Candrakīrti, <i>Vaiśeṣika Sūtra</i> , Gaṅgeśa, Aurobindo, Wang Ch'ung, Fa-tsang, Wang Fu-chih
Inference	Augustine, Avicenna, Cārvāka, <i>Nyāya-sūtra</i> , Gaṅgeśa
Self-awareness	Augustine, <i>Yogāsūtra</i> , <i>Vaiśeṣika Sūtra</i> , Śāṅkara, Mohanty, Suzuki, Nishitani
Empiricism	Matilal, Wang Ch'ung, Wang Fu-chih, Nishida, Nishitani
Reason and Intuition	Augustine, Avicenna, Chu Hsi, Wang Yang-Ming, Nishida
Skepticism	Philo, Augustine, Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, Cārvāka, Sriharṣa, Matilal, Chuang Tzu, Lao Tzu, Yang Chu
Appearance and Reality	Philo, <i>Sāṃkhya-kārikā</i> , <i>Questions to King Milinda</i> , Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, <i>Surāṅgama Sūtra</i> , Dignāga, Kumārila, Śāṅkara, Aurobindo, Fa-tsang
Justification	Augustine, Avicenna, <i>Sāṃkhya-kārikā</i> , Dharmakīrti, Kumārila, Cārvāka, <i>Nyāya-sūtra</i> , Gaṅgeśa, Matilal
Perception	Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, <i>Nyāya-sūtra</i>
Philosophy of Mind	<i>Yogāsūtra</i> , Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, <i>Nyāya-sūtra</i> , Gaṅgeśa, Aurobindo, Mohanty, Hsüan-tsang, Chu Hsi, Wang Yang-Ming

This list suggests Western works often included in introductory courses that relate in interesting ways to the works represented here:

Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i>	Zera Jacob, Walda Heywat, al-Kindi, Mencius
Plato, <i>Apology</i>	Confucius, Lao Tzu, I-Hsüan, Suzuki
Plato, <i>Republic</i>	Philo, Origen, Cārvāka, Hsün Tzu, Yang Chu
Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	Egyptian philosophy, Upanishads, Confucius, Mencius
Descartes, <i>Meditations</i>	Philo, Augustine, Avicenna, <i>Sāṃkhya-kārikā</i> , Dharmakīrti, Kumārila, Cārvāka, <i>Nyāya-sūtra</i> , Gaṅgeśa, Śāṅkara, Matilal, Mohanty, Suzuki, Nishitani; on arguments for God's existence: Avicenna, al-Farabi, al-Ghazali, Averroës, Udayana
Berkeley, <i>Principles or Three Dialogues</i>	<i>Surāṅgama Sūtra</i> , Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Śrīharṣa, Aurobindo (on matter), Hsüan-tsang, Wang Yang-Ming
Hume, <i>Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>	Philo, <i>Sāṃkhya-kārikā</i> , Candrakīrti, <i>Vaiśeṣika Sūtra</i> , Gaṅgeśa, Nāgārjuna, Cārvāka, Śrīharṣa, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, <i>Nyāya-sūtra</i> , Matilal, Wang Ch'ung, Wang Fu-chih, Nishida, Nishitani
Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>	Walda Heywat, <i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , Sermons of the Buddha, <i>Acarāṅga Sūtra</i> , Kumārila, Confucius, Mencius, Hsün Tzu, Mo Tzu, Chu Hsi
Kant, <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i>	<i>Surāṅgama Sūtra</i> , Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Śrīharṣa, Hsüan-tsang, Wang Yang-Ming, Nishida
Marx	Fanon, Wiredu, Cārvāka (on materialism and religion)
Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>	Zera Jacob, Walda Heywat, Saadia, Sermons of the Buddha, Kumārila, Mencius, Mo Tzu
Nietzsche	Fanon, <i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , Sermons of the Buddha, Aurobindo, Yang Chu, Wang Yang-Ming, Suzuki
Russell, <i>Problems of Philosophy</i>	Philo, Buddhaghōṣa, Vādi Devasūri, Nāgārjuna, <i>Vaiśeṣika Sūtra</i> , <i>Nyāya-sūtra</i> , Śrīharṣa, Matilal, Hsün Tzu, Wang Fu-chih, Nishida, Nishitani
Existentialism	Upanishads, Vādi Devasūri, Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, I-Hsüan, Chuang Tzu, Lao Tzu, Nishida, Suzuki, Nishitani

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Finally, we are forever indebted to Hope Phillips and to Beverly, Molly, and Melanie Bonevac for their support, encouragement, understanding, and love.



TIMELINE: BEFORE THE COMMON ERA (B.C.E.)

2300    2100    1900    1700    1500    1300    1100    900    700    500    300    100

Africa

Ptahhotep (2150?)

Any (1400?)

Amenemope (1100?)

Book of the Dead (600?)

West Asia

South Asia

*Rg Veda* (c. 1000)

Upaniṣads (900–300)

Buddha (563–483)

Mahāvīra (6th century)

*Bhagavad Gītā* (200?)

Mīmāṃsā  
(1st century)

East Asia

Lao Tzu (6th century?)

Confucius (551–479)

Mo Tzu (470?–391?)

Chuang Tzu (4th century)

Mencius (372?–298?)

Hsün Tzu (298–212)

The West

Socrates (470?–399)

Plato (427?–347)

Aristotle (384–322)

Cicero (106–43)

TIMELINE: THE COMMON ERA (C.E.)

0      200      400      600      800      1000      1200      1400      1600      1800      2000

Zera Yacob (1599–1692)  
 Walda Heywat (1630?–?)  
 Frantz Fanon  
 (1925–1961)

Philo (20 B.C.E.–40 C.E.)  
 Origen (185–253)  
 St. Augustine (354–430)

al-Ghazali (1058–1111)  
 Averroës (1126–1198)  
 Maimonides (1135–1204)  
 al-Kindi (9th century)  
 al-Farabi (870–950)  
 Saadia (882–942)  
 Avicenna (980–1037)

Nāgārjuna (2nd century)  
 Nyāyasūtra (2nd century)  
 Sāṃkhyakārikā (4th century)  
 Yogasūtra (4th century)  
 Candrakīrti (c. 600)  
 Kumārila (c. 650)  
 Dharmakīrti (c. 660)  
 Śāṅkara (c. 720)  
 Udayana (c. 1000)

Śrīharṣa (c. 1150)  
 Madhva (1197–1276)  
 Gaṅgēsa (c. 1325)  
 Rūpa Gosvāmi (c. 1550)  
 Annambhaṭṭa (c. 1600)  
 Vivekananda  
 (1863–1902)  
 Aurobindo  
 (1872–1950)

Wang Ch'ung (27–100?)

Hsüan-tsang (596–664)  
 Fa-tsang (643–712)  
 I-hsüan (d. 867)  
 Chu Hsi (1130–1200)

Wang Yang-Ming (1472–1529)  
 Wang Fu-chih (1619–1692)  
 D. T. Suzuki  
 (1870–1966)

Kitaro Nishida  
 (1870–1945)  
 Keiji Nishitani  
 (1900–)

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)  
 Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)  
 Rene Descartes (1596–1650)  
 John Locke (1632–1704)  
 Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)  
 Karl Marx (1818–1883)  
 Jean-Paul Sartre  
 (1905–1980)



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# PART I Africa







## ANCIENT EGYPT

**A**ncient Egypt produced much interesting ethical literature millennia before the birth of Confucius, Socrates, or Jesus. The selections below include texts of several different kinds.

**Instructions** Old Kingdom writers popularized instructions, series of maxims strung together as advice from father to son, as a literary genre. The maxims are bits of practical advice. Authors of instructions varied the format and content, but much of the wisdom transmitted was popular; authors relied on traditional proverbs as well as on their own insights. The longest and best known of the instructions, *The Instruction of Ptahhotep*, appears below. It survives in four copies, the earliest of which is in Middle Egyptian. But many scholars believe that the work dates from the Sixth Dynasty (2300–2150 B.C.E.) and encodes the morality of the late Old Kingdom aristocracy. It focuses on basic issues of social relations and on basic virtues—self-control, moderation, kindness, generosity, justice, truthfulness, and discretion—which are to be practiced toward all. This instruction, like many others, seems to rest on faith in the perfectability of human beings. It is optimistic that people can meet the demands of morality.

New Kingdom instructions are less pretentious than those of earlier eras. Intended for average people, they reflect the ethical outlook of the middle classes. *The Instruction of Any*, composed during the Eighteenth Dynasty (1550–1305 B.C.E.), is advice from a father, a minor official, to his son. Interestingly, the son debates his father, insisting that the advice is too hard to follow. For the first time, perfectability comes into question: Can the son lead a completely moral life?

**Tomb Inscriptions** Many tombs feature carvings discussing the achievements and moral worth of the person buried therein. Some have additional songs, hymns, or entreaties to the gods. Typically, these concern death. Their authors evidently had considerable freedom to record their reflections on death and, correspondingly, on life. Those that seemed especially creative or instructive were copied on papyrus. *The Song from the Tomb of King Intef* survives in two such copies with an illustration of four musicians led by a blind harpist. Dating from the Middle Kingdom (probably 1500–1300 B.C.E.), it voices skepticism about the afterlife and urges the living to “make holiday”—a phrase that means “to hold a funeral banquet” as well as “to party”—while they have the chance.

**Didactic Literature** Instructions are but one form of literature designed to make ethical points and investigate the meaning of life and death. *The Dispute between a Man and His Ba*, a famous poem dating from the Twelfth Dynasty (1990–1785 B.C.E.), also falls into this category. It recounts a dialogue between a