



The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy

By Norman Melchert

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Ideal for courses in introductory or ancient and medieval philosophy, *The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy, Volume I: Pre-Socratics through Descartes* covers the same material as the first half (chapters 1-13) of author Norman Melchert's longer volume, *The Great Conversation*. Now in its fifth edition, this historically organized introductory text treats philosophy as a dramatic and continuous story--a conversation about humankind's deepest and most persistent concerns. Tracing the exchange of ideas between history's key philosophers, the book demonstrates that while constructing an argument or making a claim, one philosopher almost always has others in mind. It addresses the fundamental questions of human life: Who are we? What can we know? How should we live? and What sort of reality do we inhabit?

The fifth edition retains the distinctive feature of previous editions: Melchert provides a generous selection of excerpts from major philosophical works and makes them more easily understandable to students with his lucid and engaging explanations. Ranging from the Pre-Socratics to Descartes, the selections are organized historically and include four complete works: Plato's *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, and *Crito*, and Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*. The author's commentary offers a rich intellectual and cultural context for the philosophical ideas conveyed in the excerpts. Extensive cross-referencing shows students how philosophers respond appreciatively or critically to the thoughts of other philosophers. The text is enhanced by two types of exercises--"Basic Questions" and "For Further Thought"--and more than thirty-five illustrations.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Melchert's book is unquestionably the best philosophy textbook I have ever read. My students love the book. Melchert writes with utter clarity and his examples are superb. His careful choice of primary sources and brilliant use of them in his prose is nothing short of genius. I generally cringe at the wooden writing style of textbooks, and find some philosophy texts particularly deadly. Melchert's text shatters all of my textbook nightmares. " --Thomas Bell, *Brevard College*

About the Author

Norman Melchert is at Virginia Commonwealth University (Emeritus).

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