

# Great Philosophers

(17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Century)

# IMMANUEL KANT

In his chief philosophical work *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant wrote:

“I inevitably believe in the existence of God and in a future life, and I am certain that nothing can shake this belief, since my moral principles would thereby be themselves overthrown, and I cannot disclaim them without becoming abhorrent in my own eyes.”

(Kant 1929, 856). Emp added.

“In other words, belief in a God and in another world is so interwoven with my moral sentiment that as there is little danger of my losing the latter, there is equally little cause for fear that the former can ever be taken from me.”

(Kant 1929, 857; Critique of Pure Reason). Emp added.

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One of the Greatest Philosophers in the History of Western Philosophy

# JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

In his renowned educational book *Emile* (1762), Rousseau wrote:

“Whether matter is eternal or created, whether its origin is passive or not, it is still certain that the whole is one, and that it proclaims a single intelligence; for I see nothing that is not part of the same ordered system, nothing which does not co-operate to the same end, namely, the conservation of all within the established order. This being who wills and can perform his will, this being active through his own power, this being, whoever he may be, who moves the universe and orders all things, is what I call God. To this name I add the ideas of intelligence, power, will, which I have brought together, and that of kindness which is their necessary consequence.”

(Rousseau 1911, Book IV). Emp Added.

“God is intelligent, but how? Man is intelligent when he reasons, but the Supreme Intelligence does not need to reason; there is neither premise nor conclusion for him, there is not even a proposition. The Supreme Intelligence is wholly intuitive, it sees what is and what shall be; all truths are one for it, as all places are but one point and all time but one moment. Man’s power makes use of means, the divine power is self-active. God can because he wills; his will is his power. God is good; this is certain; but man finds his happiness in the welfare of his kind. God’s happiness consists in the love of order; for it is through order that he maintains what is, and unites each part in the whole.”

(Rousseau 1911, Book IV). Emp Added.

“It is not in my power to believe that passive and dead matter can have brought forth living and feeling beings, that blind chance has brought forth intelligent beings, that that which does not think has brought forth thinking beings. I believe, therefore, that the world is governed by a wise and powerful Will; I see it or rather I feel it, and it is a great thing to know this.”

(Rousseau 1911, Book IV). Emp added.

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## Founder Of Modern Deism



# VOLTAIRE

“Tonight I was in a meditative mood. I was absorbed in the contemplation of nature; I admired the immensity, the movements, the harmony of those infinite globes. I admired still more the Intelligence which directs these vast forces. I said to myself: ‘One must be blind not to be dazzled by this spectacle; one must be stupid not to recognize the Author of it; one must be mad not to worship Him’.”

(Voltaire, as cited in Redman 1963, 187). Emp Added.

“I die, adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies and detesting superstitions.”

(Voltaire, as cited in Parton 1884, 577). Emp added.

“All nature cries to us that He exists, that there is a Supreme Intelligence, a power immense, an order admirable, and all teaches us our dependence.”

(Voltaire, as cited in Parton 1884, 554). Emp added.

“I believe in God, not the God of the mystics and the theologians, but the God of nature, the great geometrician, the architect of the universe, the prime mover, unalterable, transcendental, everlasting.”

(Voltaire, as cited in Cragg 1970, 237). Emp added.

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French Philosopher and Historian, one of the most Influential Thinkers of the Enlightenment

# DAVID HUME

In 1745, in his *famous letter to John Coultts* (Lord Provost of Edinburgh), David Hume wrote:

“Wherever I see Order, I infer from Experience that there, there hath been Design and Contrivance. And the same Principle which leads me into this Inference, when I contemplate a Building, regular and beautiful in its whole Frame and Structure; the same Principle obliges me to infer an infinitely perfect Architect, from the infinite Art and Contrivance which is display'd in the whole Fabrick of the Universe.”

(See Hume 1977, 120; A Letter From a Gentleman to His Friend in Edinburgh). Emp added.

In the Introduction to his book *The Natural History of Religion* (1757), Hume stated:

“The whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent Author; and no rational enquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion.” (Hume 1956, 21). Emp Added.

In *The Natural History of Religion* (1757), Hume wrote:

“Were men led into the apprehension of invisible, intelligent Power by a contemplation of the works of nature, they could never possibly entertain any conception but of one single Being, who bestowed existence and order on this vast machine, and adjusted all its parts, according to one regular plan or connected system. ...All things in the universe are evidently of a piece. Every thing is adjusted to every thing. One design prevails throughout the whole. And this uniformity leads the mind to acknowledge one Author.”

(Hume 1956, 26). Emp Added.

“The order of the universe proves an omnipotent Mind.”

(Hume 1978; Treatise, 633n). Emp Added.

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**Scottish Empiricist Philosopher, Historian and Economist, Founder of Modern Skepticism**



# SPINOZA

In his central philosophical work *Ethics* (1677), Benedict de Spinoza wrote:

“By God, I mean a Being absolutely infinite - that is, a substance consisting in infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality.”

(Spinoza 1883, Part I “Concerning God”, Def. VI). Emp added.

Spinoza looked on Jesus Christ as a man of transcendent moral genius, standing out above Moses and the prophets. Spinoza looked on Jesus as a Son of God, but not as a God.

In discussing the nature of prophetic vision he wrote:

“I believe not that any man ever came to that singular height of perfection but Christ, to whom the ordinances of God that lead men to salvation were revealed, not in words or visions, but immediately: so that God manifested himself to the apostles by the mind of Christ, as formerly to Moses by means of a voice in the air. And therefore the voice of Christ may be called, like that which Moses heard, the voice of God. In this sense we may likewise say that the wisdom of God, that is, a wisdom above man’s, took man’s nature in Christ, and that Christ is the way of salvation.”

(Spinoza, as cited in Frederick Pollock, *Spinoza: His Life and Philosophy*, Adamant Media Corporation, Boston, 2000, 352). Emp added.

“I say that it is by no means necessary to salvation to know Christ after the flesh; but of the eternal Son of God, that is, the eternal wisdom of God, which has shown itself forth in all things, and chiefly in the mind of man, and most chiefly of all in Jesus Christ, we are to think far otherwise. For without this no one can attain the state of blessedness; since this alone teaches what is true and false, good and evil. And because, as I have said, this wisdom was chiefly shown forth through Jesus Christ, his disciples preached the same as by him it was revealed to them, and showed that in that spirit of Christ they could exalt themselves above others.”

(Spinoza, as cited in Frederick Pollock, *Spinoza: His Life and Philosophy*, Adamant Media Corporation, Boston, 2000, 353). Emp added.

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## Dutch-Jewish Philosopher, the Chief Exponent of Modern Rationalism



# SPINOZA

A detailed black and white engraving of Baruch Spinoza, showing him from the chest up. He has long, curly hair and a beard, and is wearing a dark coat over a white shirt with a cravat.

“God, or substance, consisting of infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality, necessarily exists.”

(Spinoza 1883, Part I, Prop. XI). Emp added.

“We cannot be more certain of the existence of anything, than of the existence of a Being absolutely infinite or perfect – that is, of God.”

(Spinoza 1883, Part I, Prop. XI, Note). Emp Added.

“Besides God no substance can be granted or conceived.”

(Spinoza 1883, Part I, Prop. XIV). Emp added.

“Whatsoever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be, or be conceived.”

(Spinoza 1883, Part I, Prop. XV). Emp added.

“All things, I repeat, are in God, and all things which come to pass, come to pass solely through the laws of the infinite nature of God, and follow from the necessity of His essence. Wherefore it can in nowise be said, that God is passive in respect to anything other than Himself.”

(Spinoza 1883, Part I, Prop. XV, Note). Emp added.

“Nothing in the universe is contingent, but all things are conditioned to exist and operate in a particular manner by the necessity of the Divine nature.”

(Spinoza 1883, Part I, Prop. XXIX). Emp added.

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**Dutch-Jewish Philosopher, the Chief Exponent of Modern Rationalism**

# GIORDANO BRUNO

“Wisdom is most manifest on the surface and body of all created things, for everywhere Wisdom crieth and on all sides her voice is heard. For what are all those things which we see, stars, animals, bodies and the beauty thereof, but the voices and echoes of Wisdom, the works of the Divine Being that shew forth his lofty providence, in which as in a book may be read most clearly the story of Divine Power, Wisdom and Goodness? For the invisible things of God are discovered through those things which are understood.

This thou hast from Scripture.”

(Bruno, as cited in Singer 1950, 60-61). Emp added.

“God, that most fertile Mind, will indeed send Wisdom, but what sort of Wisdom?” Only such as can be adapted to our mental vision, in the shadow of light; as from the Sun who cannot be reached nor apprehended, who in himself continueth mysteriously and steadfastly infinite light, yet his pervasive radiance descendeth to us by the emission of rays and is communicated and diffused throughout all things.”

(Bruno, as cited in Singer 1950, 59-60) Emp added.

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Italian Philosopher, Astronomer and Mathematician, Founder of the Theory of the Infinite Universe



# GIORDANO BRUNO



“The One Infinite is perfect, in simplicity, of itself, absolutely, nor can aught be greater or better. This is the one Whole, God, universal Nature, occupying all space, of whom naught but infinity can give the perfect image or semblance.”

(Bruno, as cited in Singer 1950, 61).

“The Universal Intellect is the innermost, most real and essential faculty and the most efficacious part of the world-soul. It is the one and the same thing, which fills the whole, illumines the universe, and directs nature in producing her species in the right way. It plays the same role in the production of natural things as our intellect does in the parallel production of rational systems.”

(Bruno 1962, 81).

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**Italian Philosopher, Astronomer and Mathematician, Founder of the Theory of the Infinite Universe**

# GEORGE BERKELEY

Dr. Berkeley's philosophy of science anticipated Ernst Mach's physics and Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Two centuries before Einstein, Berkeley rejected the theory of absolute space, time, and motion, in his treatise *De Motu* (On Motion, 1721). Berkeley's major mathematical work *The Analyst* (1734) comprises numerous objections to the doctrine of fluxions and the concept of infinitesimals.

(See Sir Karl Popper, "A Note on Berkeley as Precursor of Mach and Einstein," in *Conjectures and Refutations*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1992; see also K. Popper, "Berkeley's Anticipation of Mach and Einstein," in *Locke and Berkeley*, ed. C. B. Martin & D. M. Armstrong, London: Macmillan, 1968).

"Raise now your thoughts from this ball of earth to all those glorious luminaries that adorn the high arch of heaven. The motion and situation of the planets, are they not admirable for use and order? Were those (miscalled erratic) globes once known to stray, in their repeated journeys through the pathless void? Do they not measure areas round the sun ever proportioned to the times? So fixed, so immutable are the laws by which the unseen Author of nature actuates the universe."

(Berkeley 1910, 2nd Dial.) Emp added.

"When I say the being of a God, I do not mean an obscure general Cause of things, whereof we have no conception, but God, in the strict and proper sense of the word. A Being whose spirituality, omnipresence, providence, omniscience, infinite power and goodness, are as conspicuous as the existence of sensible things, of which (notwithstanding the fallacious pretences and affected scruples of Sceptics) there is no more reason to doubt than of our own being."

(Berkeley 1910, 3rd Dial.) Emp added.

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**Irish Philosopher and Mathematician, Founder of Modern Idealism,  
famous as "The Precursor of Mach and Einstein"**



# JOHN STUART MILL

Concerning the existence of an Intelligent Creator, Mill wrote this:

“Whatever ground there is to believe in an Author of nature is derived from the appearances of the universe. The argument from design is grounded wholly on our experience of the appearances of the universe. It is, therefore, a far more important argument for theism than any other.

The order of nature exhibits certain qualities that are found to be characteristic of such things as are made by an intelligent mind for a purpose. We are entitled from this great similarity in the effects to infer similarity in the cause, and to believe that things which it is beyond the power of man to make, but which resemble the works of man in all but power, must also have been made by Intelligence armed with a power greater than human.”

(Mill, as cited in Castell 1988, 181-182). Emp added.

“Viewing the matter impartially, it does appear that there is a preponderance of evidence that the Creator desired the pleasure of His creatures. This is indicated by the fact, which cannot itself be denied, that pleasure of one description or another, is afforded by almost all of the powers, mental and physical, possessed by the creature.”

(Mill, as cited in Castell 1988, 186). Emp added.

Mill maintained that the structure of the eye proves a designing Mind or Intelligent Creator:

“The parts of which the eye is composed, and the arrangement of these parts, resemble one another in this very remarkable respect, that they all conduce to enabling the animal to see. These parts and their arrangement being as they are, the animal sees. Now sight, being a fact which follows the putting together of the parts of the eye, can only be connected with the production of the eye as a final cause, not an efficient cause; since all efficient causes precede their effects. But a final cause is a purpose, and at once marks the origin of the eye as proceeding from an Intelligent Will.”

(Mill, as cited in Castell 1988, 182). Emp added.

“Among the facts of the universe to be accounted for, it may be said, is mind; and it is self evident that nothing can have produced mind but Mind.”

(Mill 1969, 439) Emp added.

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**English Philosopher and Economist the Major Exponent of Utilitarianism**

# LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

According to Encyclopedia Britannica (1997),  
“Wittgenstein is the greatest philosopher of the 20th century.”

“To believe in God means to understand the question about the meaning of life.

To believe in God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter.

To believe in God means to see that life has a meaning.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Arthur Allen Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr,  
Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought, New York, Free Press, 1988, 567). Emp added.

At one time, Wittgenstein had begun each day by repeating the Lord’s Prayer. Concerning this prayer,  
once he told his friend Maurice Drury:

“It is the most extraordinary prayer ever written. No one ever composed a prayer like it. But remember  
the Christian religion does not consist in saying a lot of prayers, in fact we are commanded just the  
opposite. If you and I are to live religious lives it must not just be that we talk a lot about religion,  
but that in some way our lives are different.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections, editor – Rush Rhees,  
Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1981, 109). Emp added.

The diaries that Wittgenstein kept during the First World War (in which he was a volunteer) reveal that  
he often prayed, not that he should be spared from death, but that he should meet it without cowardice  
and without losing control of himself:

“How will I behave when it comes to shooting? I am not afraid of being shot but of not  
doing my duty properly. God give me strength! Amen! If it is all over with me now, may I die a good  
death, mindful of myself. May I never lose myself! Now I might have the opportunity to be a decent  
human being, because I am face to face with death. May the spirit enlighten me.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?,  
London, Routledge, 1993, 8-9). Emp added. Copyright (c) 1995-2008 by Tihomir Dimitrov – compiler, M.Sc. in Psychology (1995),  
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## One of the Founders of Analytic Philosophy



# LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

To Drury he said:

“It is my belief that only if you try to be helpful to other people  
will you in the end find your way to God.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?, London, Routledge, 1993, 20). Emp added.

In 1929 Wittgenstein wrote:

“If something is good it is also divine. In a strange way this sums up my ethics.  
Only the supernatural can express the Supernatural.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?, London, Routledge, 1993, 16). Emp added.

Here is a comparison of the Gospels with Paul's letters:

“The spring which flows quietly and transparently through the Gospels seems to have foam on it in Paul's Epistles. Or, that is how it seems to me. Perhaps it is just my own impurity which sees cloudiness in it; for why shouldn't this impurity be able to pollute what is clear? But to me it's as if I saw human passion here, something like pride or anger, which does not agree with the humility of the Gospels. As if there were here an emphasis on his own person, and even as a religious act, which is foreign to the Gospel. In the Gospels – so it seems to me – everything is less pretentious, humbler, simpler. There are huts; with Paul a church. There all men are equal and God himself is a man; with Paul there is already something like a hierarchy; honours and offices. That is, as it were, what my nose tells me.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?, London, Routledge, 1993, 16). Emp added.

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## One of the Founders of Analytic Philosophy

# LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

“WITTGENSTEIN: Drury, what is your favourite Gospel?

DRURY: I don't think I have ever asked myself that question.

WITTGENSTEIN: Mine is St. Matthew's. Matthew seems to me to contain everything. Now, I can't understand the Fourth Gospel. When I read those long discourses, it seems to me as if a different person is speaking than in the synoptic Gospels. The only incident that reminds me of the others is the story of the woman taken in adultery.

... At one time I thought that the epistles of St. Paul were a different religion to that of the Gospels. But now I see clearly that I was wrong.

It is one and the same religion in both the Gospels and the Epistles.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections, editor – Rush Rhees, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1981, 177-178). Emp added.

“The Christian religion is only for one who needs infinite help, therefore only for one who feels an infinite need. The whole planet cannot be in greater anguish than a single soul. The Christian faith – as I view it – is the refuge in this ultimate anguish.

To whom it is given in this anguish to open his heart, instead of contracting it, Accepts the means of salvation in his heart.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?, London, Routledge, 1993, 17).

“Christianity is indeed the only sure way to happiness.” (Wittgenstein, as cited in Monk 1991, 122). Emp added.

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**One of the Founders of Analytic Philosophy**



# LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

“Christianity is not a doctrine; I mean, not a theory about what has happened and will happen with the human soul, but a description of an actual occurrence in human life. For ‘consciousness of sin’ is an actual occurrence, and so are despair and salvation through faith.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?, London, Routledge, 1993, 16). Emp added.

“Religious faith and superstition are entirely different. One of them springs from fear and is a kind of false science. The other is a trusting.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?, London, Routledge, 1993, 18). Emp added.

Wittgenstein’s biographer and friend, Norman Malcolm wrote:

“Wittgenstein’s mature life was strongly marked by religious thought and feeling. I am inclined to think that he was more deeply religious than are many people who correctly regard themselves as religious believers.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?, London, Routledge, 1993, 21-22). Emp added.

Two years before his death, Wittgenstein said to Drury:

“I have had a letter from an old friend in Austria, a priest. In it he says he hopes my work will go well, if it should be God’s will. Now that is all I want: if it should be God’s will. Bach wrote on the title page of his Orgelbuechlein, ‘To the glory of the most high God, and that my neighbour may be benefited thereby.’”

That is what I would have liked to say about my work.”

(Wittgenstein, as cited in Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections, editor – Rush Rhees, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1981, 181-182). Emp added.

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## One of the Founders of Analytic Philosophy



# IMMANUEL KANT

A portrait of Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher, is visible in the background of the text. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark coat and a white cravat, with his characteristic white hair.

In his Lectures on *Philosophical Theology*, Kant stated:

“God created the world for His honor’s sake because it is only through the obedience to His holy laws that God can be honored. For what does it mean to honor God? What, if not to serve Him? But how can He be served? Certainly not by trying to entice His favor by rendering Him all sorts of praise. For such praise is at best only a means for preparing our hearts to a good disposition. Instead, the service of God consists simply and solely in following His will and observing His holy laws and commands.”

(Kant 1978, 142-143). Emp added.

“God is the only ruler of the world. He governs as a monarch, but not as a despot; for He wills to have His commands observed out of love, and not out of servile fear. Like a father, He orders what is good for us, and does not command out of mere arbitrariness, like a tyrant. God even demands of us that we reflect on the reason for His commandments, and He insists on our observing them because He wants first to make us worthy of happiness and then participate in it.

God’s will is benevolence, and His purpose is what is best.”

(Kant 1978, 156; Lectures on Philosophical Theology). Emp added.

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## One of the Greatest Philosophers in the History of Western Philosophy



# JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

*In a letter to Voltaire, Rousseau wrote:*

“I have suffered too much in my life not to look forward to another. Not all the subtleties of metaphysics can shake for one moment my belief in a beneficent Providence. I sense the existence of Providence, I believe in it, I insist on it, I hope for it, I shall defend it to my last breath.”

(Rousseau, as cited in Guehenno 1966, 351; see also Caputo 2000, 65). Emp added.

“God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil. He forces one soil to yield the products of another, one tree to bear another’s fruit. He confuses and confounds time, place, and natural conditions.”

(Rousseau 1911, Book I). Emp added.

“Conscience! Conscience! Divine instinct, immortal voice from heaven; sure guide for a creature ignorant and finite indeed, yet intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil, making man like to God! In thee consists the excellence of man’s nature and the morality of his actions; apart from thee, I find nothing in myself to raise me above the beasts - nothing but the sad privilege of wandering from one error to another, by the help of an unbridled understanding and a reason which knows no principle.”

(Rousseau 1911, Book IV; see also Hampson 1969, 34). Emp added.

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## Founder Of Modern Deism