This volume had its origins in a series of lectures delivered at the Royal Institute of Philosophy in London. These have now been collected to form a textbook which is accessible to undergraduate and advanced school students of philosophy. It consists of essays which have been written by leading present-day philosophers about some of the major figures in the history of western philosophical thought: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Marx and Engels, John Stuart Mill, Nietzsche, Bertrand Russell, A. J. Ayer and Jean-Paul Sartre. Brief biographical and bibliographical notes are also provided.

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Cover design by Ken Farnhill

## **CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS**

