

Recommended Reading

Non-Fiction & Popular Science

How the Mind Works – Stephen Pinker

Pinker is a professor of linguistics at MIT and a devotee of evolutionary biology. In his book he tries to give an account of how every aspect of human nature from our ability to fall in love to our sense of beauty could have developed as the result of evolution by means of natural selection. Although a science book Pinker's writing makes the subjects accessible and interesting and it is full of useful examples that could be worked into an essay or presentation. His other books: *The Language Instinct* and *The Blank Slate* are good but this one is the one essential read for TOK!

The Selfish Gene – Richard Dawkins

Dawkins, professor of Zoology and for public awareness of science at Oxford University is one of today's strongest advocates for the theory of evolution. This book, less polemical than *The God Delusion*, presents the reader with a clear and reasoned argument in favour of natural selection and against the argument from Intelligent Design.

The Pig that Wants to be Eaten – Julian Baggini

Is it right to eat a pig that wants to be eaten? Thought experiments are short scenarios that pose a moral or philosophical problem in a vivid and concrete way. In this book Julian Baggini presents 100 of the most intriguing thought experiments from the history of philosophy and ideas.

Man is the Measure – Rueben Abel

An excellent and accessible introduction to most of the central questions in philosophy, this book is not specifically aimed at TOK students but it has separate chapters devoted to most of the central areas covered in TOK, especially the AOKs. Abel's position is basically humanistic believing that there is an irreducibly human element to our knowledge.

50 Philosophy Ideas You Really Ought to Know – Ben Dupre

A great introduction to 50 of the most interesting issues in current philosophy with clear, concise explanations of each problem. This is part of a series of excellent books that also explore the 50 Mathematical and 50 Physics ideas that you really need to know.

A Complete History of Nearly Everything – Bill Bryson

Bill Bryson's challenge is to take subjects that normally bore the pants off most of us, like geology, chemistry and particle physics, and see if there isn't some way to render them comprehensible to people who have never thought they could be interested in science. It's not so much what we know, as how we know what we know. How do we know what is in the centre of the earth, or what a black hole is, or where the continents were 600 million years ago? How did anyone figure these things out?

The Doors to Perception – Aldous Huxley

Huxley's own account of his experiments with mescaline, a drug derived from peyote and used by Native Americans in Mexico and the south-western United States in religious ceremonies. Whether you agree that the experiment was worth trying or feel that the author is knocking on doors that should be left untouched, you are likely to admit that a challenge is forcibly put, that ideas are freshly and prodigally presented, and that even to try to answer Mr. Huxley honestly might well be a valuable experience in itself for the hostile reader.

Fermat's Last Theorem – Simon Singh

The perfect antidote to the view that maths is simply a subject of dry formulae and boring equations. Singh's account of the 300 year hunt for the solution to a problem scribbled in the margin of one of Fermat's notebooks reveals the passion, energy, enthusiasm and excitement that mathematics can evoke as well as giving a good overview of some of the greatest minds in mathematics.

The Seven Daughters of Eve – Bryan Sykes

The Seven Daughters of Eve is the fascinating account of Professor Bryan Sykes attempts to use DNA evidence to discover the maternal ancestors of the human race. Sykes has found that almost all Europeans can trace their ancestry back to one of seven women, women whom he has named Ursula, Xenia, Helena, Velda, Tara, Katrine and Jasmine. The book gives an excellent account of the rigorous development of a scientific theory and the evidence required to support it as well as some interesting insights into the life of prehistoric man.

What is this thing called Science? – A.F. Chalmers

Chalmers's book is the perfect jargon-free introduction to contemporary theories of science. He challenges the reader's naïve impressions about how science works and discusses a variety of different positions on the subject, including the views of Karl Popper and Thomas Khun. The revelation that even science is built on a set of assumptions that we just have to take for granted and that there is more to the subject than experiments and theorems helps the really understand what's going on in our most rapidly developing Area of Knowledge.

The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat – Oliver Sachs

Sachs is a psychologist whose books catalogue some of the strangest disorders and psychological conditions imaginable. Perhaps the only thing more fascinating than how the brain works is how the brain breaks down and just one of the intriguing cases that Sachs discuss is the one which inspired the title: an unfortunate person who has lost the ability to recognise people visually but who retains the ability to recognise objects visually and can still recognised people once they speak or he touches them. It appears that we have a visual system specifically designed for recognising faces and that, in the case of this patient, that system has broken down.

A History of Western Philosophy – Betrand Russell

Russell's book gives a clear, concise account of every major philosopher and philosophical position since Plato. A great reference book once you know what you are looking for but not one to read through cover to cover.

Philosophical Fiction

Sophie's World – Jostein Gaarder

Looking in her mailbox one day, a fourteen-year-old Norwegian schoolgirl called Sophie Amundsen finds two surprising pieces of paper. On them are written the questions: 'Who are you?' and 'Where does the world come from?' The writer is an enigmatic philosopher called Alberto Knox, and his two teasing questions are the beginning of an extraordinary tour through the history of Western Philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Sartre.

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

Robert M. Pirsig's account of the gradual dissolution of the mind of a professor of philosophy. Woven into the narrative, gripping in its own right, is an account of the professor's struggle with various philosophical concepts, in particular the concept of quality or good-ness, and his views on how these questions apply to problems in modern life. A more challenging read than Sophie's World but worth the extra effort.

Flatland – Edwin A. Abbott

The perfect book for anyone who has trouble conceiving of what scientists mean when they talk about a world that has more than three dimensions. Flatland is the story of 'Square', a narrator who lives in a two dimensional (flat) world where everything has length and breadth but no depth. Square begins his narration with an account of the nature of space and society in Flatland fully confident that his guide to life will leave nothing out. However, his confidence is dashed when he meets a sphere who begins to explain to him that there are other dimensions out there that Square has not even begun to consider yet.

Real Philosophy

The Republic - Plato

In the beginning there was the big three: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle ... but Socrates only exists in Plato's writings and Aristotle was Plato's student so, really, in the beginning there was Plato. The Republic is one of his most famous books in which he lays out his model of an ideal society.

The Meditations on First Philosophy – Descartes

Where it starts to get interesting! Descartes, the first of the modern philosophers, believed that we could learn philosophical truths purely by thinking about them, i.e. purely through the exercise of reason, a position called Rationalism. In this book Descartes kicked off many of the central problems in philosophy that we are still struggling with today including the nature of knowledge, what it is to be a human being and whether God exists in a surprisingly straightforward text broken down into six clear steps or meditations.

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding – Locke

The Principles of Human Knowledge – Berkeley

A Treatise of Human Nature - Hume

In opposition to Descartes' Rationalism, these three British philosophers founded the Empirical school of thought which holds that we can only know the world through direct sensory experience. The results of this seemingly simple position turn out to be quite unexpected with Berkeley denying the existence of anything other than ideas and God while Hume undermined the existence of causality, induction and therefore eventually science.

The Critique of Pure Reason - Kant

In an attempt to find a compromise between the Rationalist and Empirical positions outlined above Kant ended up writing one of the densest and most complicated books in philosophy. Only for the very brave!

Utilitarianism - Mill

A great introductory text to ethical philosophy, Mill's book outlines his philosophy of Utilitarianism which defines good actions as those that cause the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. A book that, like Descartes', has sparked centuries of debate over what is right and what is wrong.

Mind - Searle

A truly modern philosopher, in the sense that he is still alive even now, John Searle has a straightforward and down to earth approach to philosophical problems and in his book he attempts to solve some of the issues that have been plaguing us since Descartes by pointing out that the problem essentially lies in the mistaken assumptions that we made when setting up the problems in the first place.

Text Books

Theory of Knowledge – Nicholas Alchin

An introductory framework that looks at how to approach questions such as: What is good art? Can I trust my senses? Will science tell us everything? How did the Universe start? Is there life after death? The text is designed to encourage critical thinking and stimulate discussion.

Theory of Knowledge for the IB Diploma – Richard van de Lagermaat

The book guides helps students to explore the fundamental question in Theory of Knowledge: 'How do you know?' The book consists of three main parts and a conclusion. Part 1, Knowers and knowing; part two, Ways of knowing; part three, Areas of knowledge and investigates questions of an interdisciplinary nature.

A Guide Through the Theory of Knowledge Third Edition – Adam Morton

Assuming little or no philosophical knowledge, it guides beginning students through the landmarks in epistemology, covering historically important topics as well as current issues and debates.

Other Books

Cultural Differences:

Nisbett	The Geography of Thought
Diamond	Guns, Germs and Steel

WOKs:

Chomsky	On Language: Chomsky's Classic Works
Lakoff	Women, Fire and Dangerous Things
Goleman	Emotional Intelligence & Working with Emotional Intelligence
Gigerenzer	Gut Feelings: the Intelligence of the Unconscious

AOKs:

Brooks	13 Things that Don't Make Sense
Khun	The Structure of Scientific Revolutions
Davies	God and the New Physics / The Mind of God
Gribbin	In Search of Schrödinger's Cat / Science: a history 1543 – 2001
Kilne	Mathematics in Western Culture
Kilne	Mathematics and the Search for Knowledge
Hofstadter	Godel, Esher, Bach
Fukuyama	The End of History
Carr	What is History?
Popper	The Poverty of Historicism
Edman	Arts and the Man: a short introduction to aesthetics
Robinson	Ethics for Beginners
Thompson	Ethical Theory