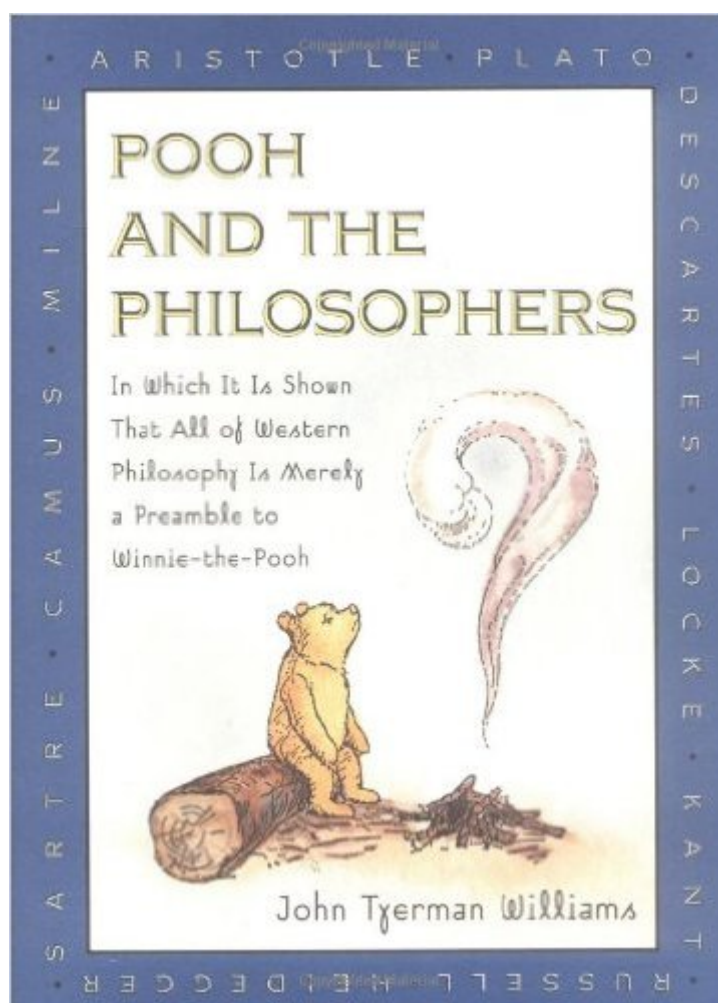


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Pooh And The Philosophers : In Which It Is Shown That All Of Western Philosophy Is Merely A Preamble To Winnie-The-Pooh



Synopsis

Discusses the idea that the ideas of all the great philosophers of the West, such as Aristotle, Plato, and Camus, can be found in the tales of Pooh, demonstrating that their philosophies can be seen throughout the varied collection of Pooh tales.

Book Information

Age Range: 4 and up

Series: Winnie-the-Pooh

Hardcover: 212 pages

Publisher: Dutton Books (August 1, 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0525455205

ISBN-13: 978-0525455202

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 1 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.7 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (13 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Pooh and the Philosophers tells us what we all should have known by ourselves - the the Bear of Little Brain is nothing less than a great philosopher and a very smart bear indeed. People give me strange looks when I laugh out loud while reading this hilarious and yet serious book on the bus but who cares? Besides, I learned more about philosophy from this book than from any university course..

This book was the primary text in a university workshop I just took on "Philosophy in Children's Literature." Being a big fan of Benjamin Hoff's "The Tao of Pooh," I approached the book with great hopes. Williams' tongue-in-cheek conceit is that the Bear of Little Brain is, in fact, the greatest philosopher that ever lived. All of western philosophy before Pooh was mere preamble and the twentieth-century existentialists were familiar with an heavily influenced by the "Great Bear." I felt that Williams was more interested in being clever than in whatever other goal he had in mind. He

presents the philosophical concepts too briefly and dismissively to be of much value. Worse, it seems he spends more space extolling the brilliant Pooh than really discussing how the (sometimes stretched past the breaking point) passages from A. A. Milne's stories relate to philosophies. Like any one-joke movie or TV series, it just got repetitive and annoying after awhile.

This book is reminiscent of the writings of conspiracy theorists. The author takes a number of threads from A.A. Milne's Pooh books and interprets them in a way to turn Pooh into the greatest teacher of Western philosophy. At the start, it seems entirely outlandish, but halfway through, you will start thinking, "Jeez, I suppose that could be true.., it makes sense, I think." Here's an example. Pooh gets a balloon from Christopher Robin in order to reach some honey. Williams posits the theory that this is referring to the earliest Greek philosophers, who were greatly interested in cosmology. The balloon, he says, represents the round earth, floating in space. The honey, thanks to Pooh's secrecy surrounding why he wanted the balloon, represents philosophical truth. In other words, the realization that the earth is round is a step towards philosophical truth. However, Pooh fails to get the honey, showing that the path to truth is not so simple. "We must not expect our first endeavours to lead us to our goal." While this book is presented in somewhat of a tongue-in-cheek format, there is little doubt that Williams is earnest in his belief, and this book could serve as a bit of a basic primer on Western philosophy as it introduces the theories of a number of great philosophers. However, this is VERY basic, and the book itself is a bit of a trifle. I'd say it's worth a read, but don't take it too seriously.

Pooh and the Philosophers is an attempt to link everything Pooh to western philosophy and thus provide the reader with a nice introduction to said. The problem is, in stretching the actions and utterances of Winnie-the-Pooh to an extreme, there is little space left to describe the details of western philosophy. So the reader is left scrambling to keep focused on the sparse details of western philosophy provided which are interspaced by long periods of Winnie-the-Pooh details. I was not able to learn much from this book as a result and I found it very frustrating.

Having read *The Tao of Pooh and Te of Piglet (Wisdom of Pooh)*, I came across this book by accident in a bookshop and bought it on impulse. The premise of the book is that the stories of Winnie the Pooh and the House at Pooh Corner contain the whole of western philosophy. The book examines how key ideas from the thinking of Plato through to the existentialists are described through these two stories. Indeed given that these stories were published in 1926 and 1928 a

number of more recent philosophers are shown to have provided either footnotes to the Pooh stories or have expounded on them. The first thing to say is that this is an enjoyable, fun and eminently readable book. I initially approached it with some scepticism and for the first part of the book harboured the fear that I may be the subject of a joke on the basis that given enough analysis the London tube timetable can probably be shown to have the key thoughts of Karl Marx or be shown to predict the date of the apocalypse. As I read through the book however I became more and more drawn into the underpinning ideas of what I had previously seen as children's stories and to my surprise found that through them I was adding considerably to my understanding of the philosophers thinking. As I began to accept the argument of a philosophical basis to the stories my intrigue switched to the nature of communicating ideas. A.A. Milne it appears had taken the extremely dry and largely inaccessible topic of philosophy and packaged it up in the most accessible of children's stories. If this is what he has done, then maybe he was just too clever since most readers of Winnie the Pooh have no idea that they are reading about philosophy. Of course this is probably a virtue since many readers would run a mile if they thought they were invited to read a philosophy book. For other readers who want to have the philosophy pointed out to them perhaps Milne set out to sow a seed which has taken 75 years to germinate and now be revealed in this book. The book establishes a convincing case that the thinking of western philosophy is contained in these apparently simple stories. Interesting though this is, more importantly it has revealed a great deal of insight about the nature of communicating ideas. This book provides an insightful glimpse into the use of stories to communicate complex ideas. More importantly just as the Winnie the Pooh stories do, it does so in a way that you learn almost by accident without feeling you had to try. If you want to learn about thinking without having to feel that you have to think, or would like to understand philosophy without the need to read a philosophy book then this is the book for you.

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