



Examined Lives: From Socrates to Nietzsche

James Miller

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A *New York Times* Notable Book for 2011

We all want to know how to live. But before the good life was reduced to ten easy steps or a prescription from the doctor, philosophers offered arresting answers to the most fundamental questions about who we are and what makes for a life worth living.

In *Examined Lives*, James Miller returns to this vibrant tradition with short, lively biographies of twelve famous philosophers. Socrates spent his life examining himself and the assumptions of others. His most famous student, Plato, risked his reputation to tutor a tyrant. Diogenes carried a bright lamp in broad daylight and announced he was "looking for a man." Aristotle's alliance with Alexander the Great presaged Seneca's complex role in the court of the Roman Emperor Nero. Augustine discovered God within himself. Montaigne and Descartes struggled to explore their deepest convictions in eras of murderous religious warfare. Rousseau aspired to a life of perfect virtue. Kant elaborated a new ideal of autonomy. Emerson successfully preached a gospel of self-reliance for the new American nation. And Nietzsche tried "to compose into one and bring together what is fragment and riddle and dreadful chance in man," before he lapsed into catatonic madness.

With a flair for paradox and rich anecdote, *Examined Lives* is a book that confirms the continuing relevance of philosophy today—and explores the most urgent questions about what it means to live a good life.

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