

10 Philosophy Books to Bring to a Desert Island

Dr. Gregory Sadler, known for his [accessible YouTube videos on philosophy](#), was asked to name ten philosophy books he would bring to a desert island. In the video that appears at the bottom of this post, he chose the following books because they “encapsulate [many] other viewpoints” and “have a lot of meat” to them.

1. *The Republic*, Plato

“A no-brainer... Most people acknowledge that *The Republic* is Plato’s masterwork... I had a friend who taught an Intro to Philosophy class just using *The Republic* because you’ve got metaphysics, ethics, political philosophy, aesthetics, epistemology, philosophy of nature rolled into it.

2. *Metaphysics*, Aristotle

“A very tough choice [of all Aristotle’s works]... It will introduce you to things like actuality and potency, or the four causes, or what privation is as opposed to fullness.”

3. *The City of God*, Augustine

“*The City of God*... is a defense of Christianity as a system of life, a system of thought in response to accusations that Christianity was weakening the Roman Empire... Worth re-reading.”

4. *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas

“Magnificent in that it is engaging with practically everybody whom Thomas had ever read. It’s a systematic attempt to try to treat not only Christian doctrine, but everything that is relevant about human nature, society, metaphysics, epistemology, and even the philosophy of the emotions.”

5. *Meditations*, René Descartes

"Descartes... is trying to sweep everything away and then rebuild... I just love Descartes for the force of his thought, [though] I don't actually buy into his metaphysics."

6. *Pensées*, Blaise Pascal

"Descartes' great nemesis... A work of apologetics that Pascal was never able to fully finish... What's there is just brilliant."

7. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, G.W.F. Hegel

"I've always loved Hegel since I started reading him. Every time that I do the work of working through this massive, complex, difficult tome, I get more out of it... He's the Thomas Aquinas of the modern age, trying to synthesize all different perspectives into one systematic unity that can be comprehended."

8. *Action*, Maurice Blondel

"Was called the French Hegel... He's tracing out this entire dialectical development, working from the bottom level up to the highest forms of society, culture, religion, philosophy, and trying to do a rigorous analysis from a phenomenological perspective."

9. *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, Max Scheler

"Scheler is very interested in value in ethics... [He] thought persons are what are fundamentally most real... If you can only pick one book written by Scheler, for me, this would be the one."

10. *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger

"It's really grown on me over time. I really enjoy some of Heidegger's analyses, after you get your way past his weird language... One of those works where you're going to get discussions of other thinkers."

