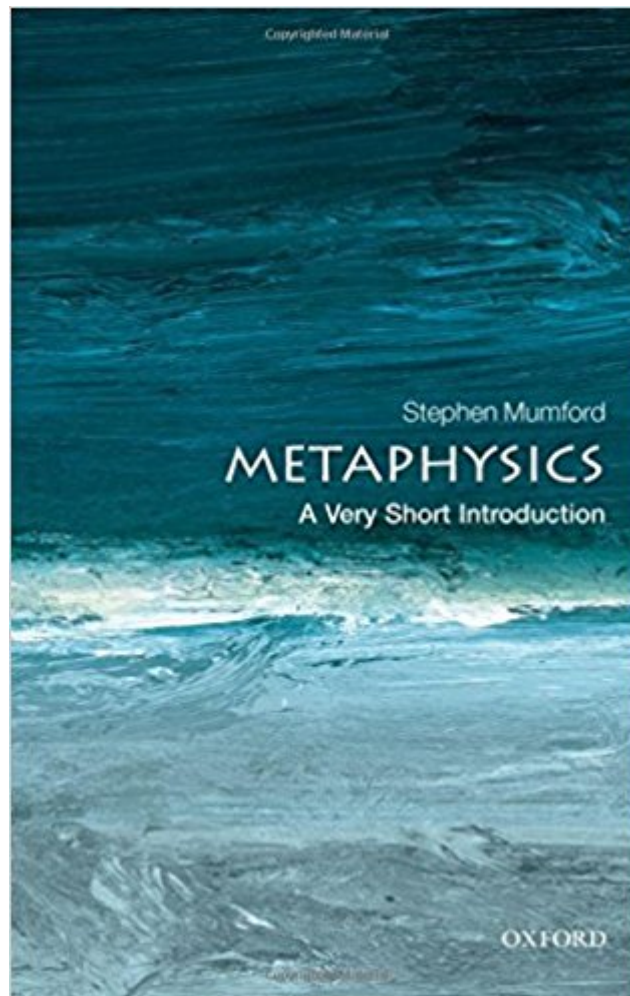




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# Metaphysics: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



## Synopsis

Metaphysics is traditionally one of the four main branches of philosophy, alongside ethics, logic and epistemology. It is an area that continues to attract and fascinate many people, even though it is generally thought to be highly complex and abstract. For some it is associated with the mystical or religious. For others it is known through the metaphysical poets who talk of love and spirituality. This Very Short Introduction goes right to the heart of the matter, getting to the basic and most important questions of metaphysical thought in order to understand the theory: What are objects? Do colors and shapes have some form of independent existence? Is the whole just a sum of the parts? What is it for one thing to cause another rather than just being associated with it? What is possible? Does time pass? By using simple questions to initiate thought about the basic issues around substance, properties, changes, causes, possibilities, time, personal identity, nothingness, and consciousness, Stephen Mumford provides a clear and down-to-earth path through this analytical tradition at the core of philosophical thought.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It manages to be jargon-free without sacrificing rigour and complexity. \* Times Higher Education Supplement \*

Stephen Mumford is Professor of Metaphysics at the Department of Philosophy, University of

Nottingham, where he is also Head of the School of Humanities and Dean of the Faculty of Arts. His most famous book is *Dispositions*, but he also authored *Laws in Nature* and *Watching Sport: Aesthetics, Ethics and Emotions*. He has also written extensively for general readers, including articles in *Times Higher Education* magazine, and he is a frequent public speaker.

Is there any value in thinking about the world and its arrangements? Does one should inquire about questions that aren't scrutinized by observation? This short book tries to answer these questions and, along the way, gives the reader a first look in some crucial metaphysics problems. The text is well organized and succeed in presenting the material in an understandable way. This book is well suited for a reader that doesn't have previous expertise in the matter. Sometimes the reading can be hard but, in the end, the work is rewarded. Usefull readings are indicated in the end of the book, along with some tips.

**Avant-Garde Politician: Leaders for a New Epoch** This is a very good and pleasant to read introduction to metaphysics. But, while main subjects are covered, or at least mentioned, I missed a discussion of "chance/random" and its relation with causality. And, when discussing what is possible (ch. 76), the notions of modalities might well have been presented, perhaps with some concepts from modal logic, leading to a partly contingent view of the past and future. Some ideas from quantum mechanics might also have been taken up, all the more so because of their importance for both the body-mind interaction problem (pp. 69-71) and possible worlds (pp. 79-82). To provide space for doing so, the attempt to legitimize concern with metaphysics by comparison with science (in the final chapter) could have been skipped. Indeed, I found it somewhat demeaning metaphysics, which does not need it. Enough to say that every person who presumes to be fully mature must be able to engage in "thinking in the abstract" (p. 104); and (2) cannot but be curious about the nature of reality - the subject matter of metaphysics. I go one step further: If I could I would test the abstract thinking ability of political leaders and dismiss all who failed. I know that most of them are unable to succeed in such a test - as clearly reflected in the way they manage the world. Accordingly, I strongly recommend this book as a first introduction to metaphysics, to be followed by some more readings - first of all, by persons who presume to lead humanity into the future. Professor Yehezkel Dror The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

I can not recommend this book more highly. It is concise, informative, profound, exceedingly witty, and an overall joy to read. The clarity that the author was able to impart on a complicated subject

that is often written about in a boring, muddled manner impressed me to no end. The even-handed way he dealt with conflicting viewpoints was yet another positive. Even the color scheme on the cover is the nicest one I have seen so far :) This book is phenomenal; any person with even a passing interest in philosophy will enjoy it immensely.

I didn't expect it to be so small. But aside from that, I love it.

After reading this book I have a much better understanding of the concept of metaphysics.

good synthesis of the subject.

I think this is the best introduction that you can find. There are alternatives but they all seem more academic. This one is more lightweight but still solid enough for me.

Clear and fun.

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