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A Curated Reading List:  
Philosophy for Creators and Entrepreneurs

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Luke  Burgis

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Luke Burgis, 2024

## Why I Created This List

Curiosity drives my work, and I feed that curiosity through continual learning.

Long form learning, specifically books, are the nourishment I return to in order to help me understand and process the world around me.

Here are a few of the most formative books that I have read and reread throughout the years. These touch on my professional life, my personal life, and my spiritual life—which I strive to make one.



When I was in my late 20's, having by then graduated from a prestigious business school, worked on Wall Street, and started several companies, I realized I was totally confused and felt pulled in a thousand different directions without an integrated source of meaning to draw from. I wanted to be fully alive, but I was stretched thin. I felt like a battery that had lost its charge.

It's so easy for life to become siloed. I enjoyed learning on my own, I loved building things, and I had a newfound fire to explore the ancient spiritual traditions. But every place I turned seemed walled off from the others: my undergrad education (at NYU Stern) and subsequent learning communities appealed to the intellect alone (I call this "Athens"); my entrepreneur friends were only interested in talking about tech, or whatever was most useful for building their companies (I call this general world "Silicon Valley"), and my religious friends (I use "Jerusalem" for shorthand) were talking a type of inside baseball of their own. Making meaning involves making connections; and part of why my friends and I lacked meaning was because nobody was helping to make connections between these disparate worlds. I would have to do it myself.

It's a shame to only be talking about questions of philosophy or spiritual things with your religious friends. You should not only be able to talk about progress with your tech friends. And serious intellectual conversations don't have to be confined to universities. I believe we must *de-silo* our world, throw open the windows and the doors, and retake ownership of our cultural heritage and the age-old questions of anthropology (What does it mean to be human? How should I then live?) that lie at the heart of the human mystery.

Philosophy and theology provide keys to understanding some of the most fundamental anthropological questions. (For most of the past 2,000 years, philosophy and theology were not sequestered or kept separate from conversations the way they are now.) In this list, I am drawing at least two books from each century, and capping the number of books that I draw from any of the past 20 centuries at five.

What you will find in this anti-mimetic format is that you are forced to respect the time and place of each century in ways that are initially difficult, but which—by the time you are done—open up a new appreciation for the way in which knowledge, innovation, and disciplines develop across time. The approach will feel *unnatural*. It runs counter to the way we are used to consuming knowledge; it requires true engagement.

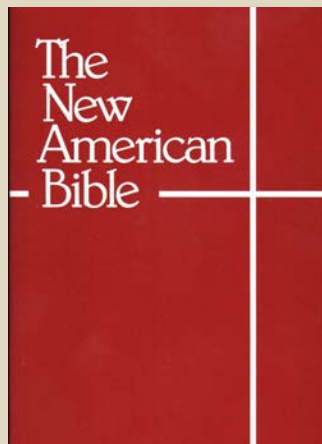
Each of the books I've selected have something important to say to us in terms of the things we create and build, but they also speak to what it means to live a good life: the pursuit of happiness. How that pursuit plays out in different contexts is one of the keys to understanding why we create certain things at certain times, and sets the foundation for a deeper understanding of progress.

My promise to you is that if you make your way through even some of these books, a rich tapestry of human potential and wisdom will begin to emerge. It won't appear as content; it will appear as art. You will begin to see the form of something new, and it will lead you deeper into the mystery.

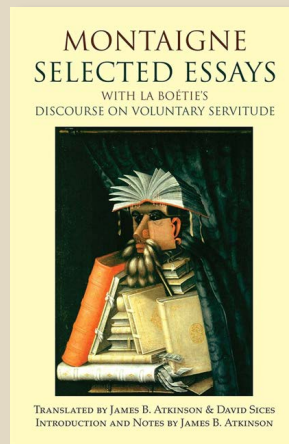
# If You Only Read Three Books From This List

“Man is a remarkably vain, variable, and elusive subject,” wrote Montaigne. But also: “The greatest thing in the world is to know how to belong to oneself.”

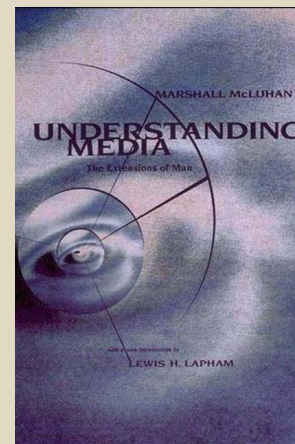
Here you have the beginnings of a modern anthropology by a highly original thinker and writer (he invented what we know as the modern “Essay”), and in this triptych his work is bookended by the theological anthropology of John, which starts with a recapitulation of creation (“In the beginning was the Word”) from the *Book of Genesis*, along with Marshall McLuhan’s essential *Understanding Media* written in the mid-20th century, in which his famous phrase, “The Medium is the Message” brings the question of form and content full circle—back to the Word Made Flesh.



**Gospel of John**



**Montaigne, Selected Essays**

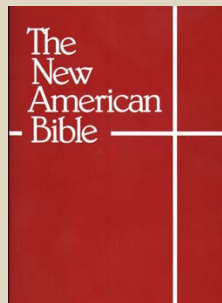


**Understanding Media:  
The Extensions of Man**  
Marshall McLuhan

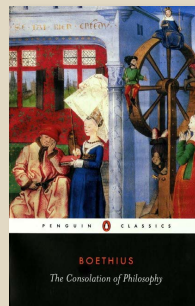


# If You Only Read Five Books From This List

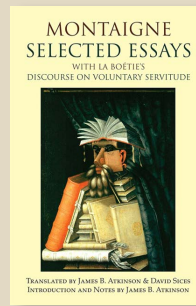
There are two essential books to now add to the initial three; for those who are more ambitious Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* is the most important book one can read for understanding the modern technological world and the various philosophies and approaches to it, from the utopian to the tyrannical. Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* sets the stage for related questions about fate, free will, divine providence, and man's rational striving to know the truth. Boethius ponders the ways in which we, with imperfect knowledge, are still caught up in a mystery greater than what we are able to understand. Combined with the three books you will have already dabbled in (Montaigne: the modern; John: the creator; and McLuhan: the medium), you now have an even more robust framework for seeing the Form through the Content.



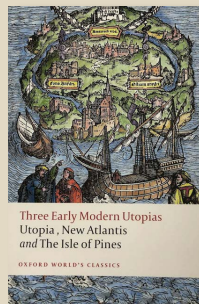
**Gospel of John**



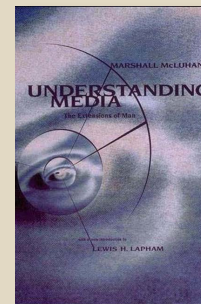
**On the Consolation of Philosophy**  
Boethius



**Montaigne, Selected Essays**



**New Atlantis**  
Francis Bacon

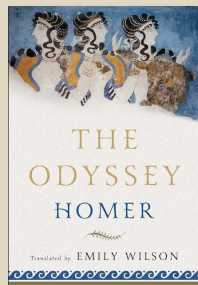


**Understanding Media:  
The Extensions of Man**  
Marshall McLuhan

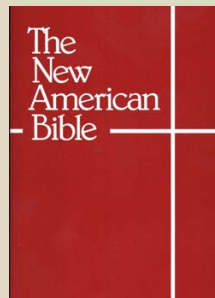


# If You Only Read Ten Books From This List

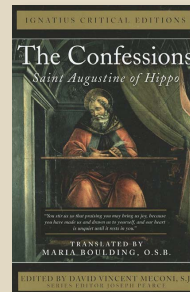
The five additions to the list: Augustine's *Confessions* is essential spiritual reading and one of the first books in human history to explore the role of the memory in one's evolution. *The Odyssey* is a tale of coming home and all that this journey entails; we all have to make it. A sense of place and belonging is fundamental to most of the questions about human life we are asking in the modern world. *The Tale of Genji* explores the role of artistic expression in court life, and how interpersonal relationships influence the creative process. In *Hyperion*, the protagonist is a poet and revolutionary who contemplates the role of the artist and the transformative power of art. *The Purgatorio* is essential to understanding the process of purification that must take place in order to create what is true, good, and beautiful.



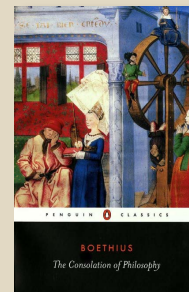
**The Odyssey**  
Homer



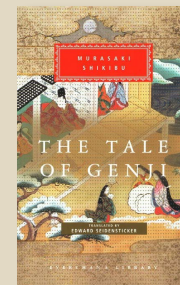
**Gospel of John**



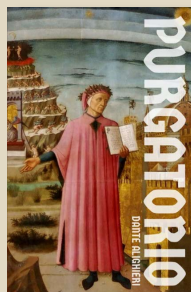
**The Confessions**  
Saint Augustine  
of Hippo



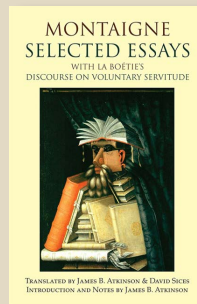
**On the Consolation  
of Philosophy**  
Boethius



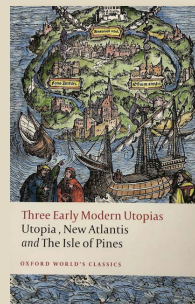
**The Tale of Genji**  
Genji  
Monogatari



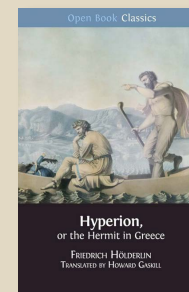
**The Purgatorio**  
Dante Alighieri



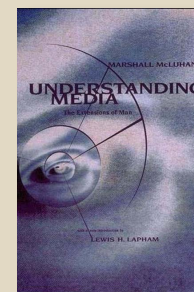
**Montaigne,  
Selected Essays**



**New Atlantis**  
Francis Bacon



**Hyperion, or The  
Hermit in Greece**  
Holderlin



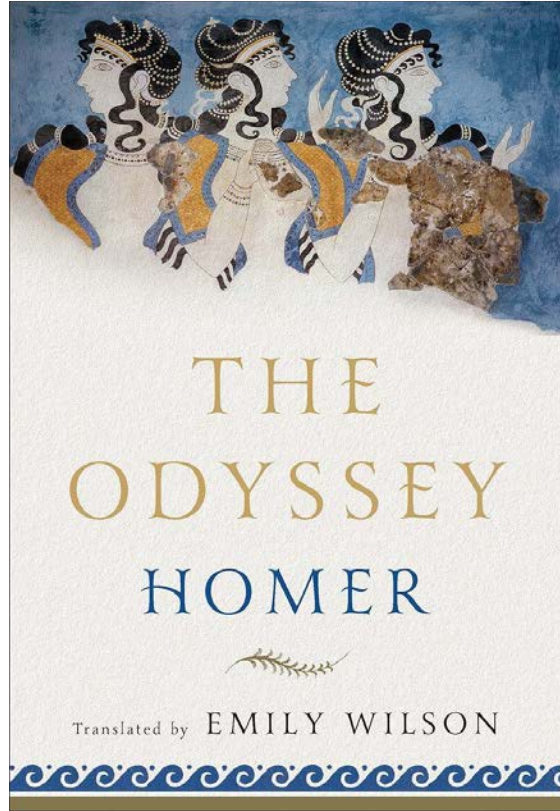
**Understanding Media:  
The Extensions of  
Man**  
Marshall McLuhan



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BC: Books From Classical Antiquity

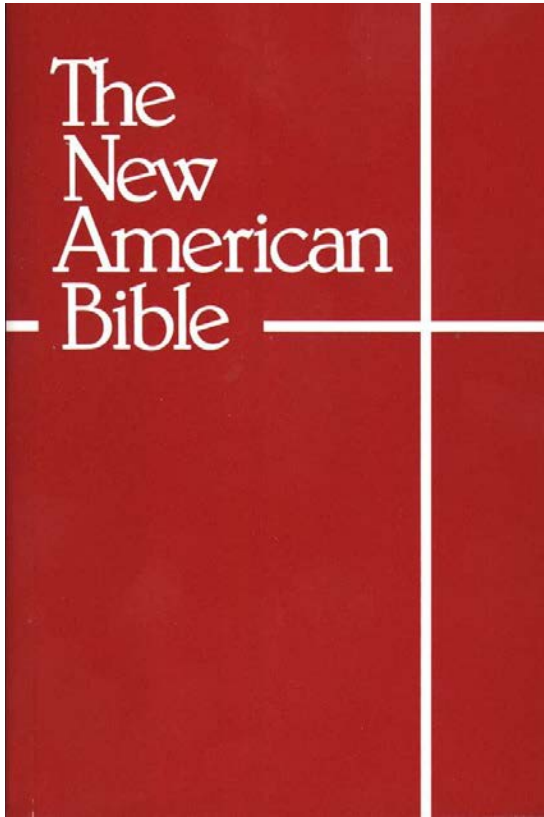
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## *The Odyssey*

Homer

This epic poem is a timeless tale of a hero's journey home, full of adventure, ingenuity, and perseverance in the face of adversity—qualities every entrepreneur needs.

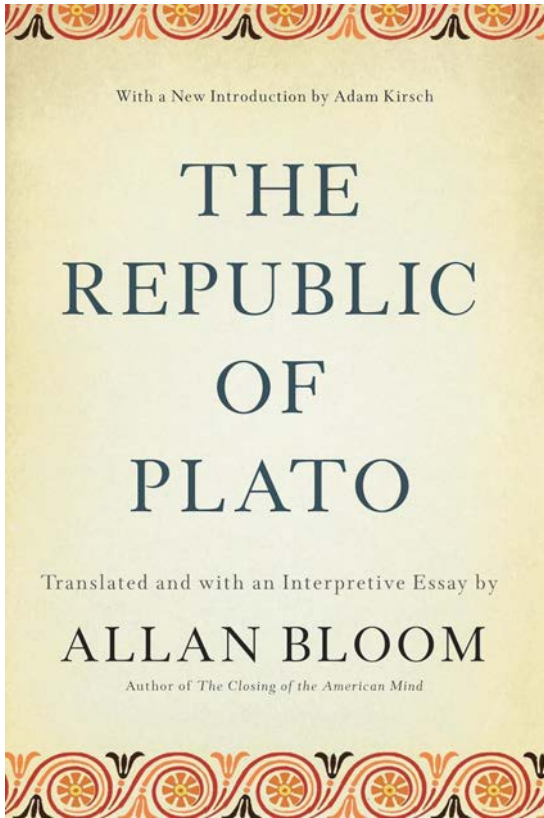


## ***The Book of Genesis***

First 3 chapters

The creation story is *the* story for every creator to know, religious or not, because it is the foundation on which Western civilization was built, inspiring humans to “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.” It is here where man first ‘names’ things, takes ownership and responsibility for the earth, and sees himself as created in the image and likeness of God.

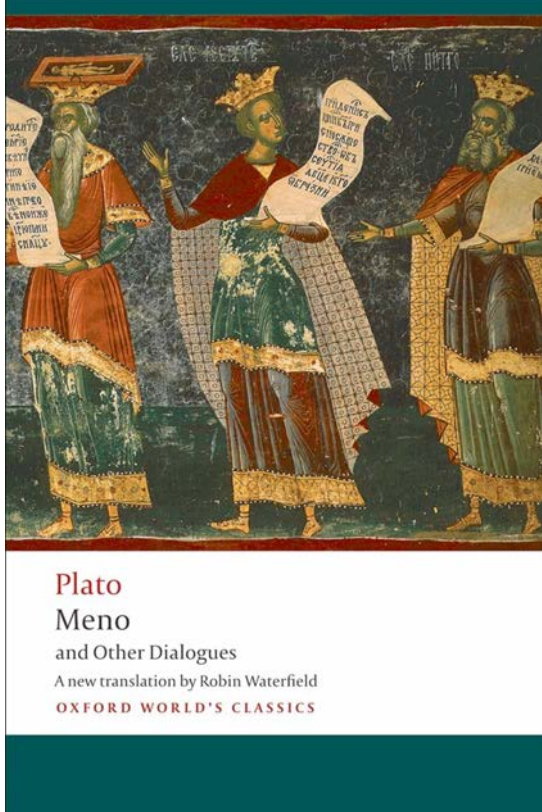




## ***The Republic, Book VIII***

Plato

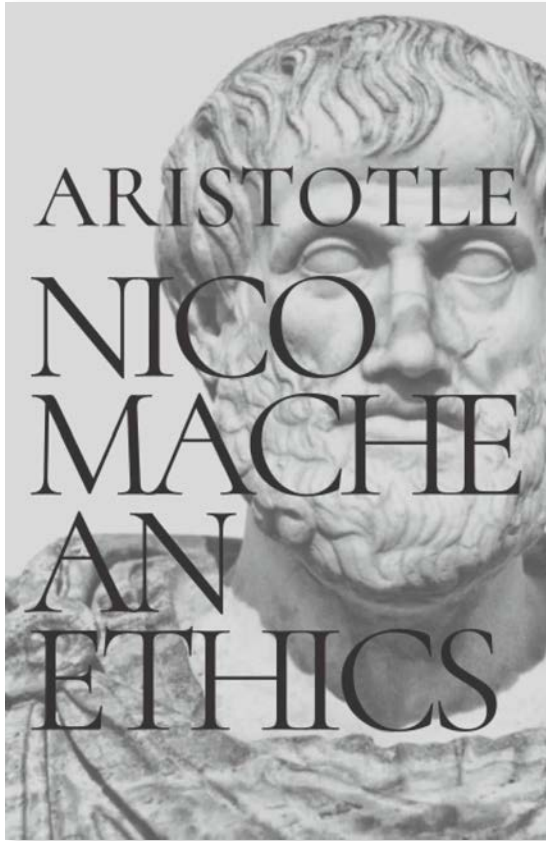
Plato's examination of different political systems and why they fail offers insights into leadership, governance, and the importance of virtue that apply to running any organization. The role of *mimesis* (it's promise and perils) also comes into play in his account.



## *The Meno*

Plato

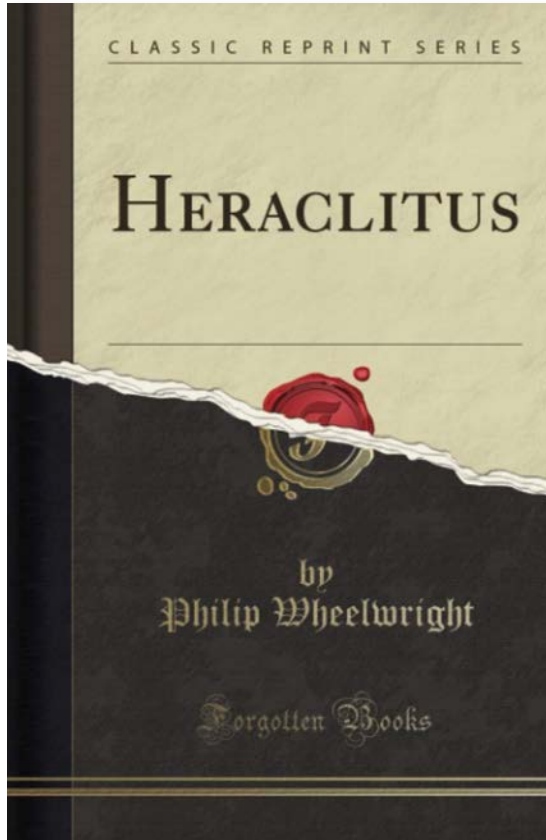
This Socratic dialogue explores the nature of knowledge, learning, and whether virtue can be taught, raising questions relevant to mentoring and developing talent—including your own.



## ***Nichomechean Ethics***

Aristotle

Aristotle's treatise on how to live well emphasizes practical wisdom, moderation, courage, justice and other virtues worth cultivating as a leader, but it is his teleological premise that every creator must understand (and that is why it is included on this list). What are you creating *for*?

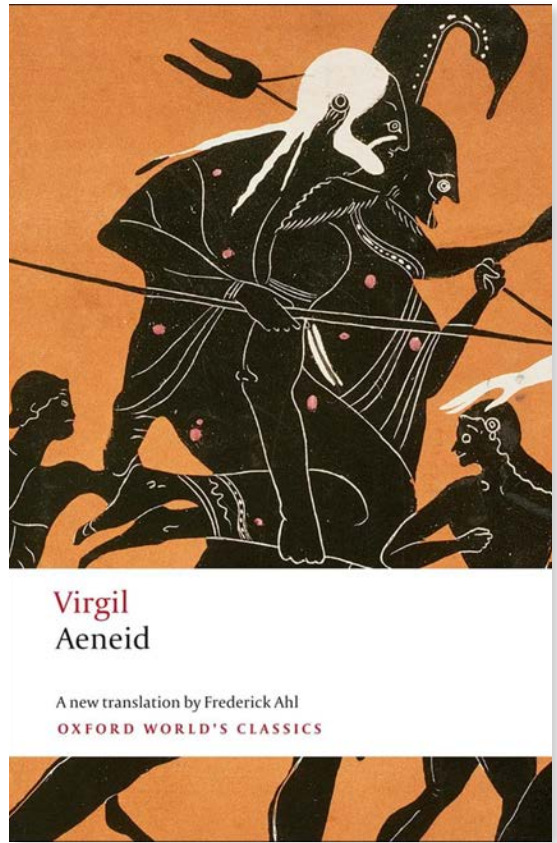


## ***Heracclitus***

Commentary by Philip Wheelwright

The enigmatic sayings of Heraclitus illuminate the constancy of change, the unity of opposites, and the importance of logos (reason)—ideas that can help entrepreneurs navigate uncertainty with peace of mind.





## *Aeneid*

Virgil

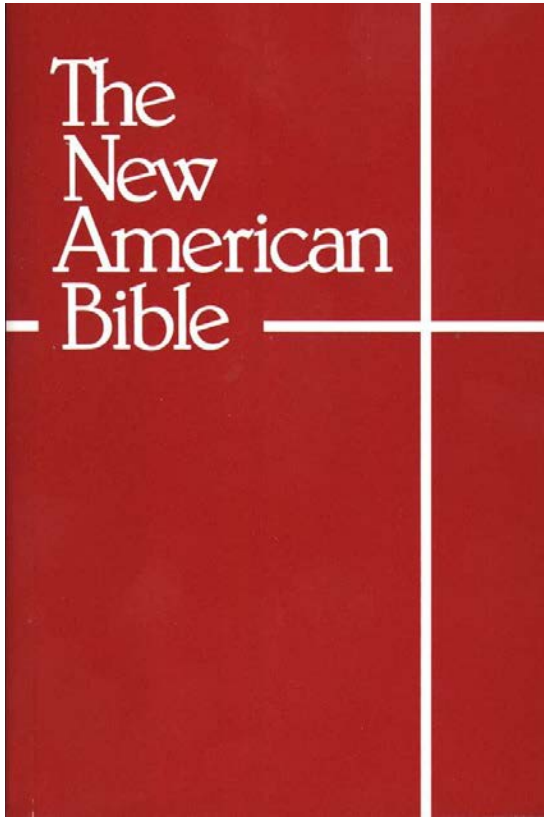
Virgil's epic highlights the Roman virtues of duty, piety, and self-sacrifice for a higher cause beyond oneself. This book is about foundations—the foundation of a city—and serves as a metaphor for founders everywhere, even in its mythological form.



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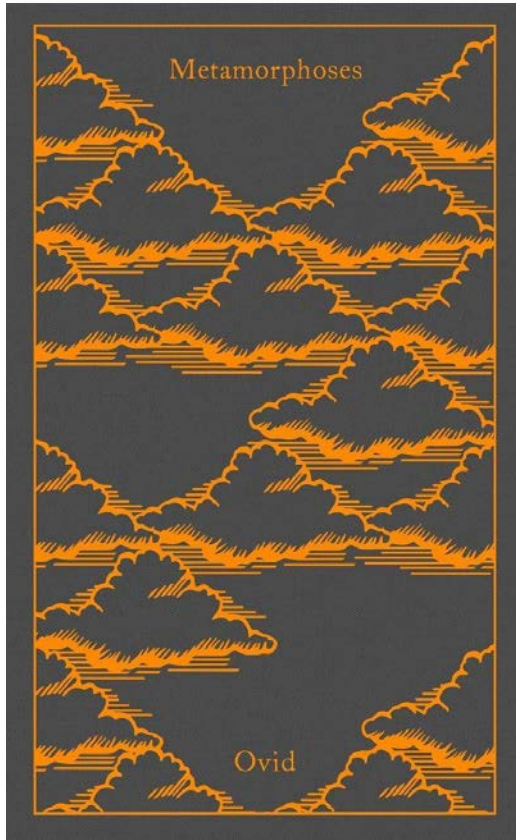
Books From The 1st Century

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## ***The Gospel of John***

Critical for understanding the *logos* and its connection to the first three chapters of Genesis (the opening to this Gospel mirrors the beginning of Genesis), but most importantly to learn about the life of Christ in its highest Christological form, as Christ claims to be ushering in a *new creation*. Whether you are Christian or not, this is a must-read text because of the effect this event has had in human history.



## ***Metamorphosis***

Ovid

Ovid's mythological tales of transformation are rich in creative imagery and symbolism that can spark an entrepreneur's imagination and storytelling abilities. All creation involves change. Every new technology we invent transforms us. Read together with McLuhan, this book is particularly illuminating.

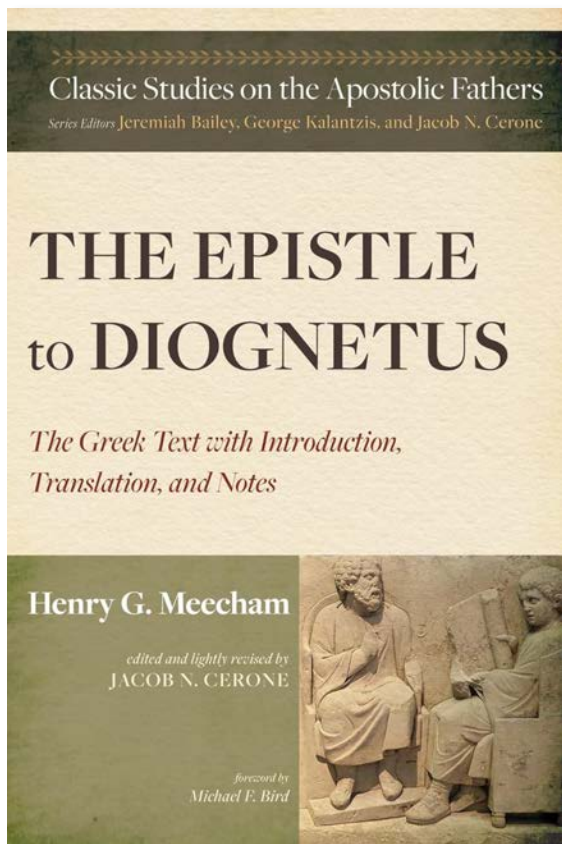




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Books From The 2nd Century

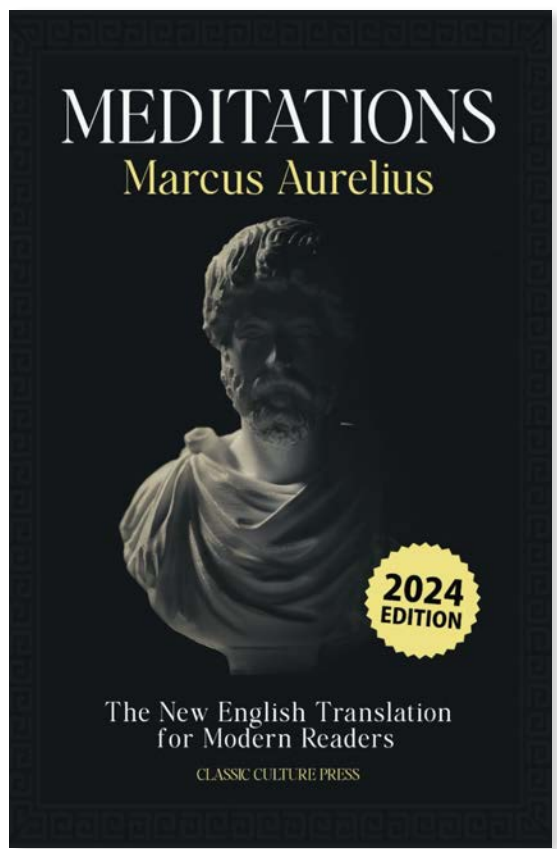
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## ***The Epistle to Diognetus***

Unknown

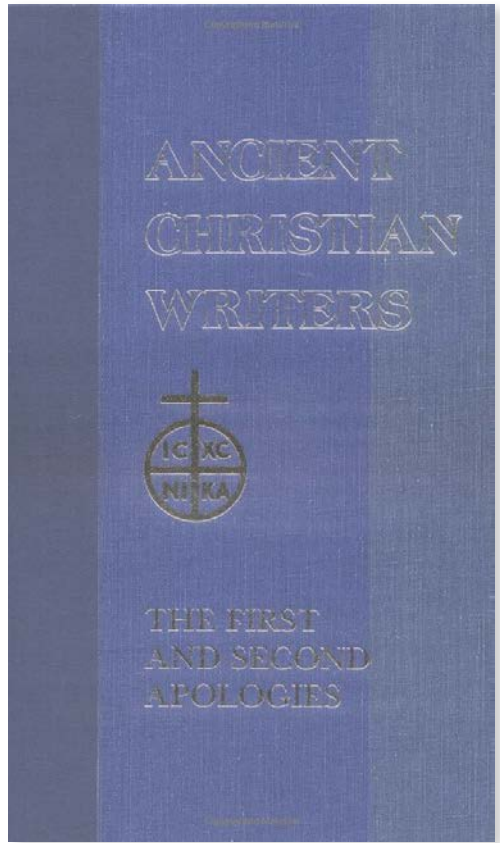
This early Christian apologetic text eloquently expresses the power of leading by example and embodying one's values in an authentic way of life, but most importantly provides valuable insights into living in an anti-mimetic manner when necessary, and how one's *modus vivendi* can affect the culture.



## ***Meditations***

Marcus Aurelius

The private reflections of this philosopher-king model stoic wisdom, self-discipline, and the importance of acting with purpose while accepting what you can't control. It almost pained me to include this book on the list due to the pop psychology that has come out of it, but it's true that this book is a classic—I just recommend reading it on its own terms, prior to watching any Tik-Tok or Instagram clips or short-form summaries that turn it into a life hack.



## ***First Apology***

Justin Martyr

Justin's reasoned defense of his faith before Roman authorities is a classic example of persuasive speaking that combines logic, personal credibility, and emotional appeal. His concept of the *logos spermatikos* (the word which is a seed) is particularly valuable for creators.

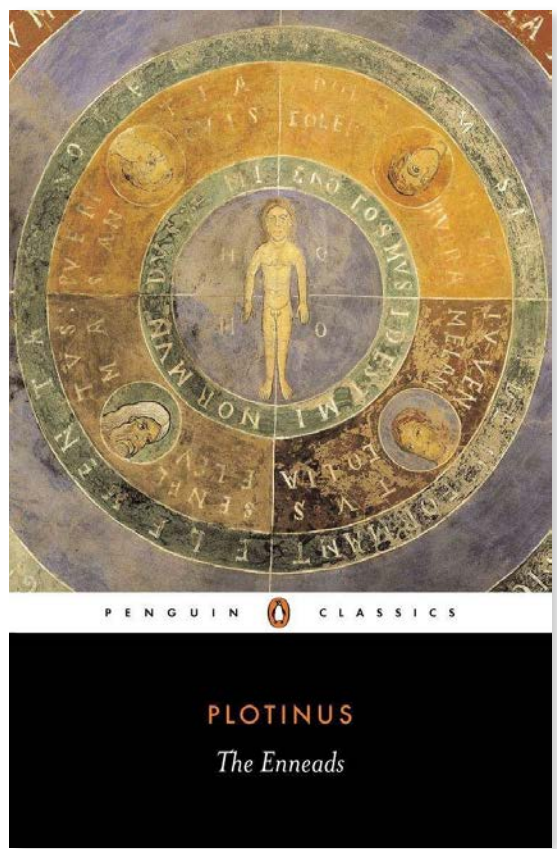




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Books From The 3rd Century

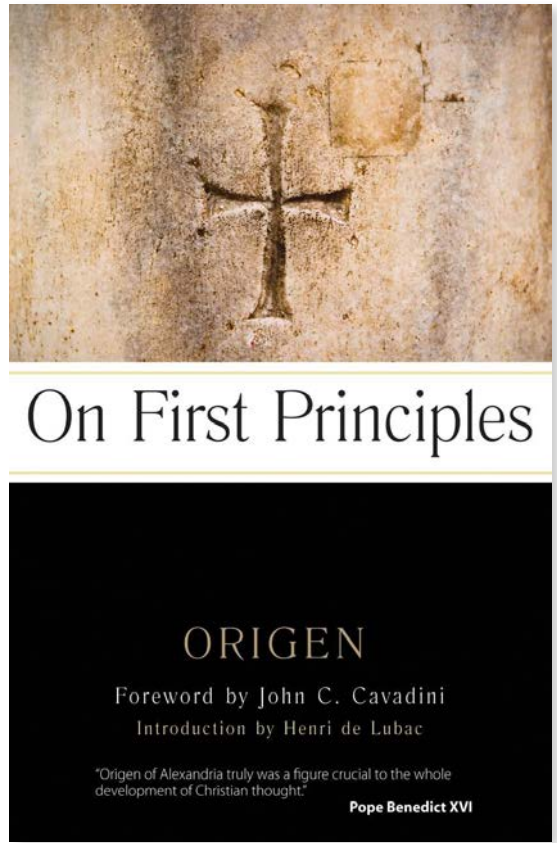
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## ***The Enneads***

Plotinus

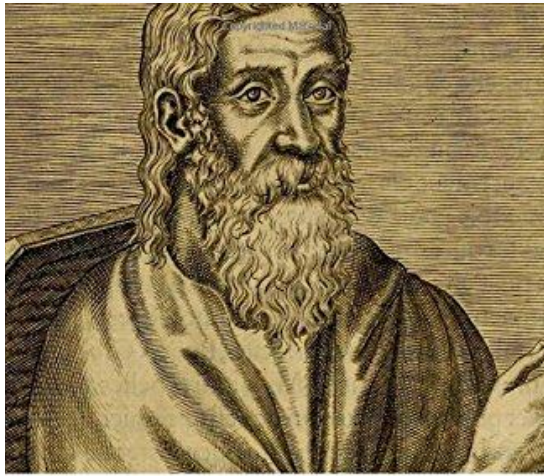
The mystical philosophy of Plotinus, which distills Platonic thought, can offer a vision of entrepreneurship which taps into the generative power of the universe (as opposed to the entrepreneur as individualist, or an Ayn Randian prime-mover) and can help creators become mystics—which in my view is the only way to remain a creator.



## *On First Principles*

Origen

Origen's attempt at a systematic theology grappling with first principles and apparent contradictions provides a model for thinking through the foundations of a business—which always involve paradoxes and contradictions, at least on the surface.



## MISCELLANIES (STROMATA)

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA



## ***Stromata***

Clement of Alexandria

Clement's eclectic "patchwork" of insights woven together from various sources illustrates a creative approach to synthesizing old ideas into new combinations. Clement advocates for a comprehensive understanding that integrates faith with secular knowledge. If he were alive, he would be an advocate of de-siloing Athens, Jerusalem, and Silicon Valley.



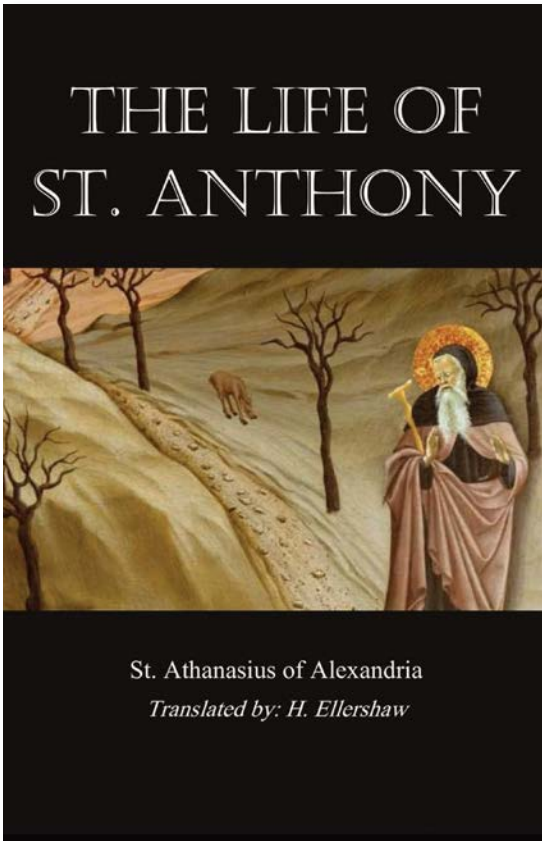


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Books From The 4th Century

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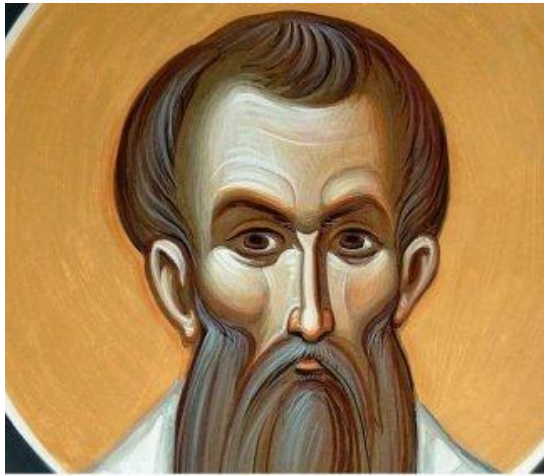




## ***Life of Anthony***

Athanasius of Alexandria

This biography of a desert monk shows the power of solitude, asceticism, and spiritual discipline to sharpen focus and resilience. Anthony left the world behind to go into the desert alone and battle demons, which is precisely what each of us has to do sometime in our life. And this is very much what starting a company feels like.



# THE HEXAMERON

SAINT BASIL



## *The Hexameron*

Basil of Caesarea

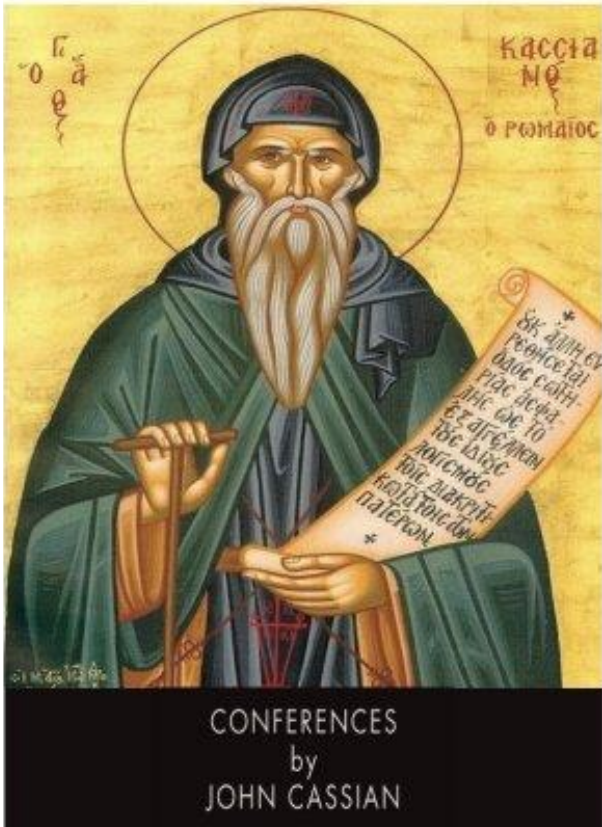
Basil's reflections on the six days of creation combine theology and science, modeling an integrated approach to knowledge. Each of the six days, if read and contemplated carefully, has something to teach us about the *process* of the creative act.



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Books From The 5th Century

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## *The Conferences*

John Cassian

Cassian's dialogues with desert monks offer practical wisdom on overcoming vices, cultivating virtues, and developing self-awareness as a leader. But the most important contribution of Cassian is his treatment of the *logismoi*, and how to do battle with intrusive ideas that take you away from your vocation. Do you know the “8 Thoughts” that every human has? If you do not, this book is a must read.



PENGUIN CLASSICS

ST AUGUSTINE

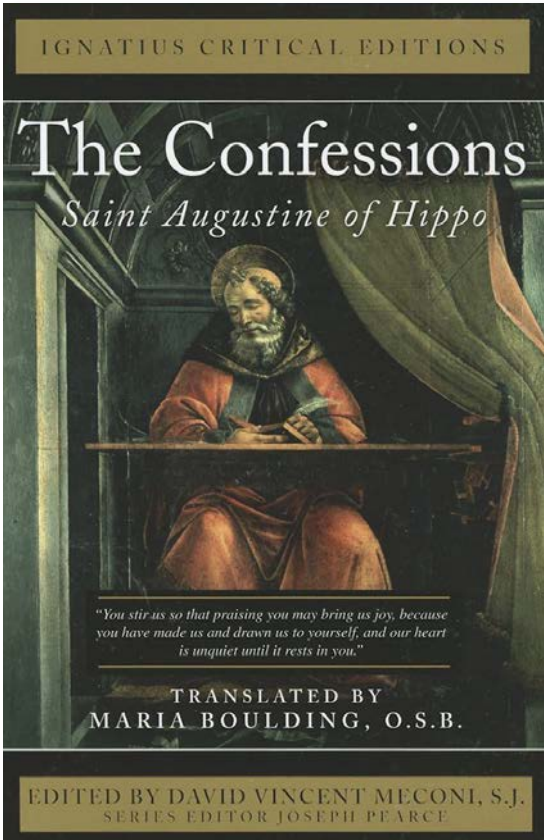
*City of God*

## *City of God*

Augustine of Hippo

Augustine's magisterial work explores the ultimate meaning and purpose behind human civilization, prompting reflection on the deeper "why" behind an entrepreneur's work but ultimately prompting us to question which true city we are living in. *Civitas Dei* includes a proper demonology of the city, and we can map this demonology onto modern life if we are willing to put in this effort. Know what you are up against.





## ***The Confessions***

Augustine of Hippo

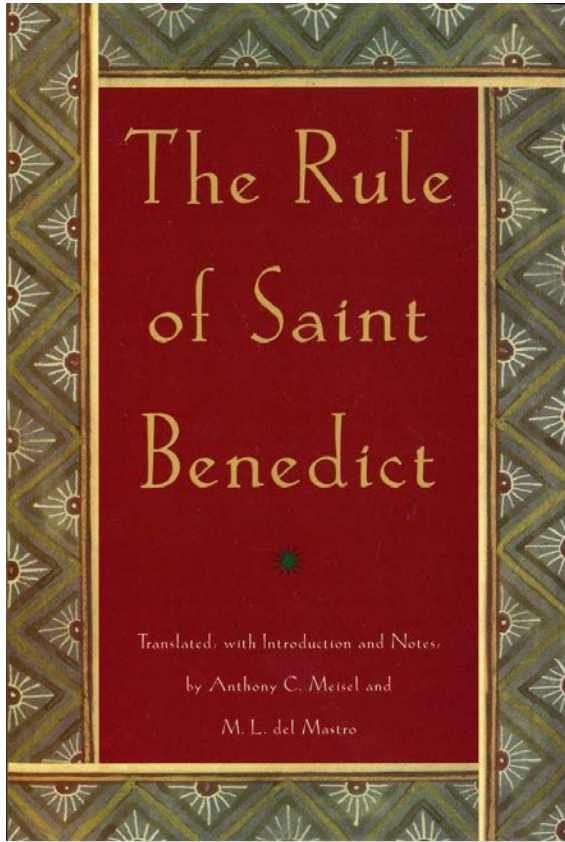
Augustine's introspective autobiography is a powerful example of the transformative power of honest self-examination and the quest for truth and wisdom, and it highlights the role of memory in the act of creation and re-creation. Remembering the work of our lives is part of the process of living our lives, and the basis for transformation and renewal. The role of the memory is undervalued in our world.



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Books From The 6th Century

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## ***Rule of Benedict***

Benedict of Nursia

Benedict's guide to monastic life emphasizes the values of humility, obedience, and serving others that are the foundation of servant leadership. I have included it here because of the importance of having a “Rule of Life”—something I believe would benefit from. If you enjoy the Rule, I suggest investigating the Abbey of Cluny, established in 910 A.D., and the role that it played in the renewal of European civilization for nearly two hundred years.



PENGUIN CLASSICS

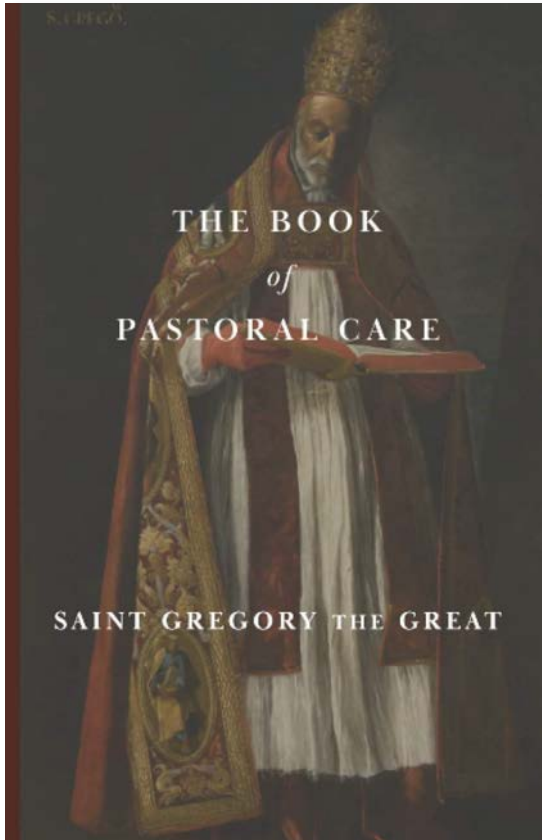
BOETHIUS

*The Consolation of Philosophy*

## *The Consolation of Philosophy*

Boethius

Written in prison, Boethius' dialogue with Lady Philosophy explores the fickleness of fortune and the importance of pursuing true wisdom over worldly success. This book introduces key concepts like fate, freedom, and agency. At a time when many people seem to be swiftly becoming nihilists who doubt that humans have free will (AI has accelerated this view), this book is more topically relevant than ever before.

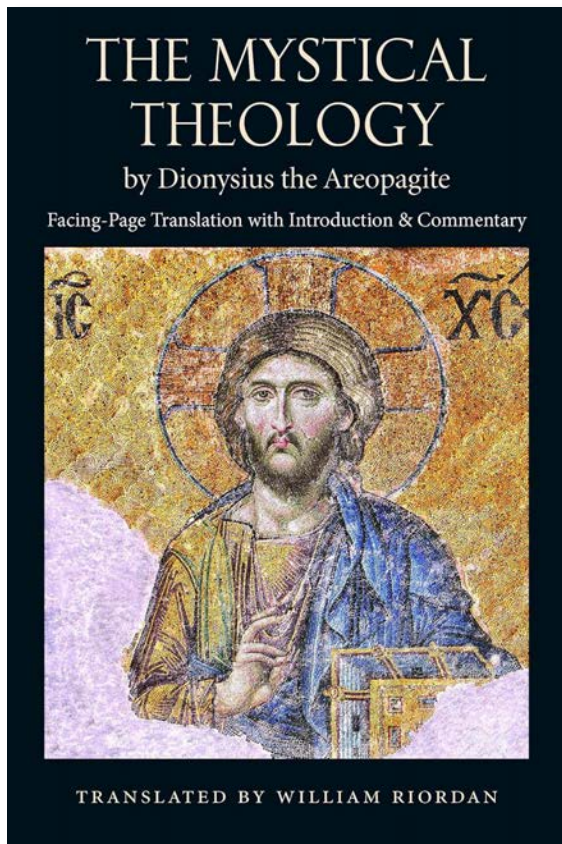


## ***The Book of Pastoral Care***

Gregory the Great

This manual for church leaders offers insights into pastoral leadership, balancing authority and compassion, and leading in times of crisis. In my view, every leader should think in terms of pastoral care—so Gregory’s words should not be limited to the formation of religious. Formation can be thought of in four pillars: human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral. The last relates to the ways in which we serve and care for others. If you don’t do that well, you can’t be a principled entrepreneur.

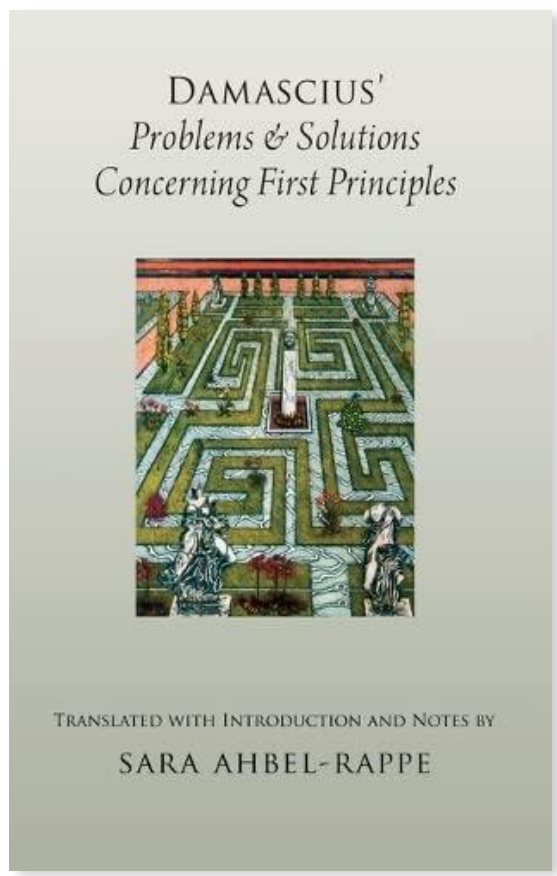




## *The Mystical Theology*

Dionysius The Areopagite

This enigmatic treatise on the limits of human knowledge about the divine speaks to the importance of embracing mystery and paradox in the creative process. The apophatic way. Creation as subtraction.



## ***Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles***

Damascius

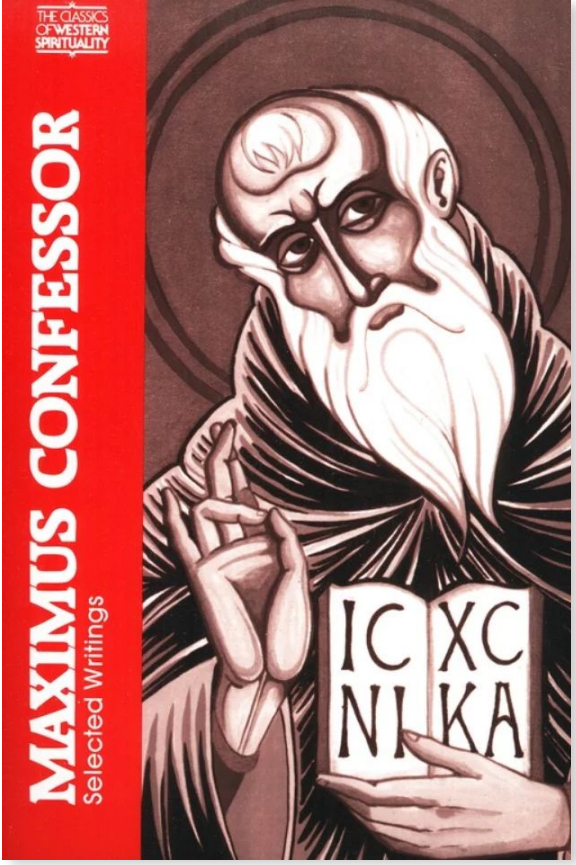
One of the last works of ancient philosophy, it wrestles with metaphysical questions and aporiai (puzzles) that can sharpen an entrepreneur's critical thinking. If we're finding solutions to 'problems', we must be able at least attempt to define and map out the problem first. This book will help you do that.



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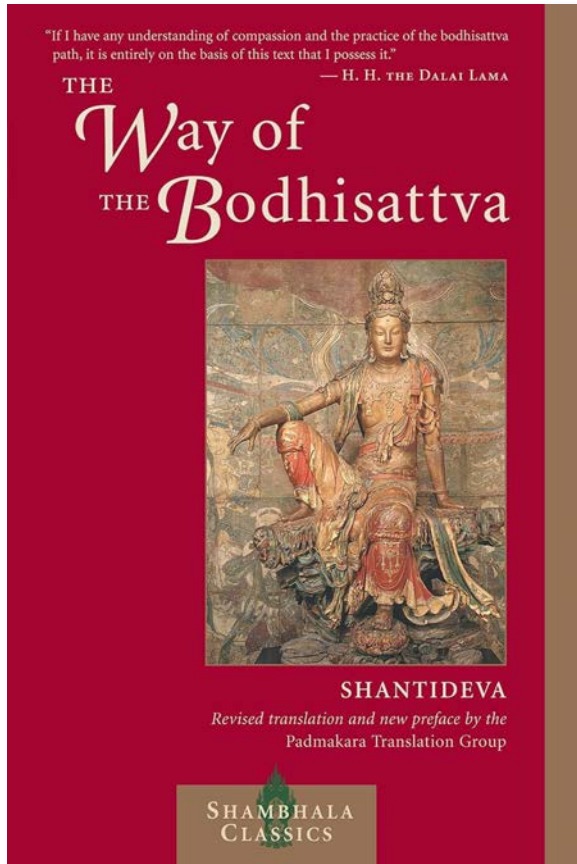
Books From The 7th Century

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## *The Writings of Maximus the Confessor*

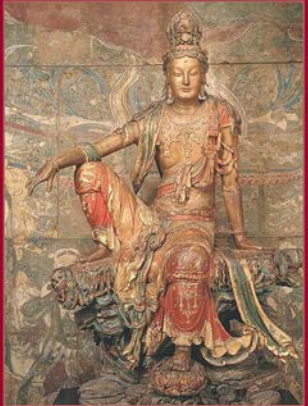
Maximus' theology emphasizes the cosmic significance of human action and free will, which can infuse an entrepreneur's work with greater meaning and responsibility. If we think of our work as being limited to a certain time and space in history, it is nowhere near as meaningful as it is once we grasp its cosmic significance. This book raises the level of the playing field.



"If I have any understanding of compassion and the practice of the bodhisattva path, it is entirely on the basis of this text that I possess it."

— H. H. THE DALAI LAMA

THE  
**Way of**  
THE **Bodhisattva**



SHANTIDEVA

*Revised translation and new preface by the  
Padmakara Translation Group*

SHAMBHALA  
CLASSICS

## *The Way of the Bodhisattva*

This Buddhist text outlines the path of compassion, generosity, and selfless service to others, and offers useful tactics to achieve peace of mind and a recognition of disordered desires for what they are: things that have the potential to get in the way and lead us astray.

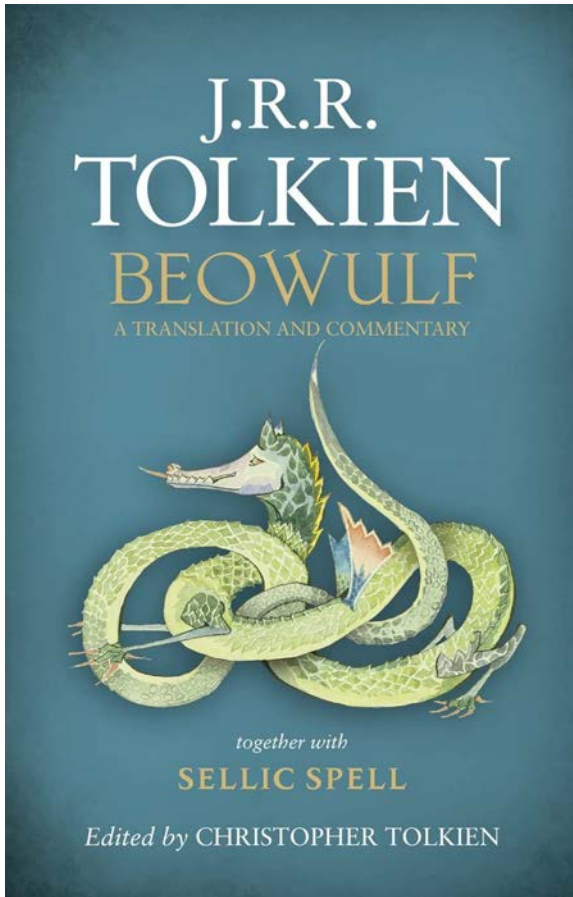




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Books From The 8th Century

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## ***Beowulf***

Anonymous

The old English epic of a hero who leads by courageous example and sacrifices himself for his people embodies the archetype of heroic leadership. This book should be read and studied in every business school in the world, first semester.

Andrew Lang  
Robert Louis Stevenson



*Arabian Nights  
or One Thousand  
and One Nights +  
New Arabian Nights*

## ***The Thousand and One Nights (Arabian Nights)***

translated by Andrew Lang

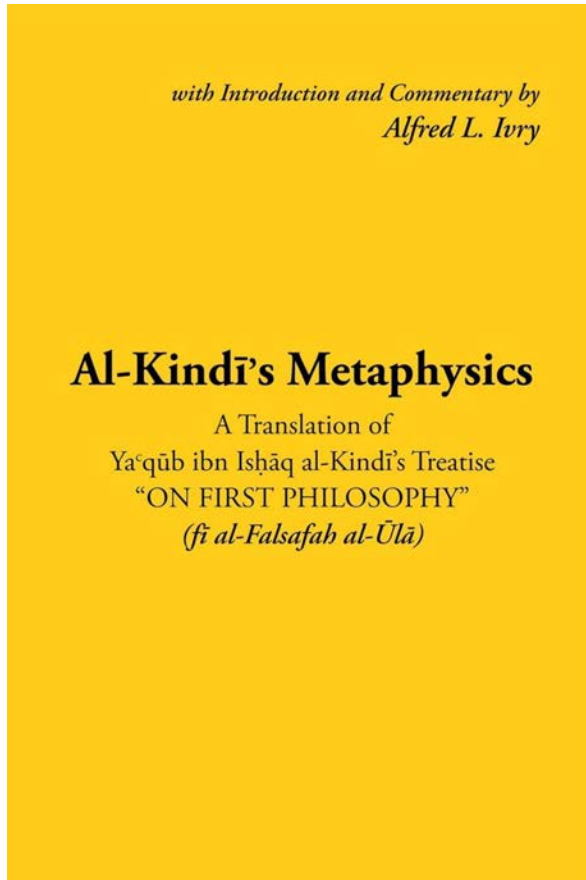
This collection of enchanting stories from the Islamic Golden Age is a treasure trove of creative storytelling and imagination. It highlights resourcefulness and adaptability in near every story, and characters often take significant risks in order to obtain rewards.



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## Books From The 9th Century

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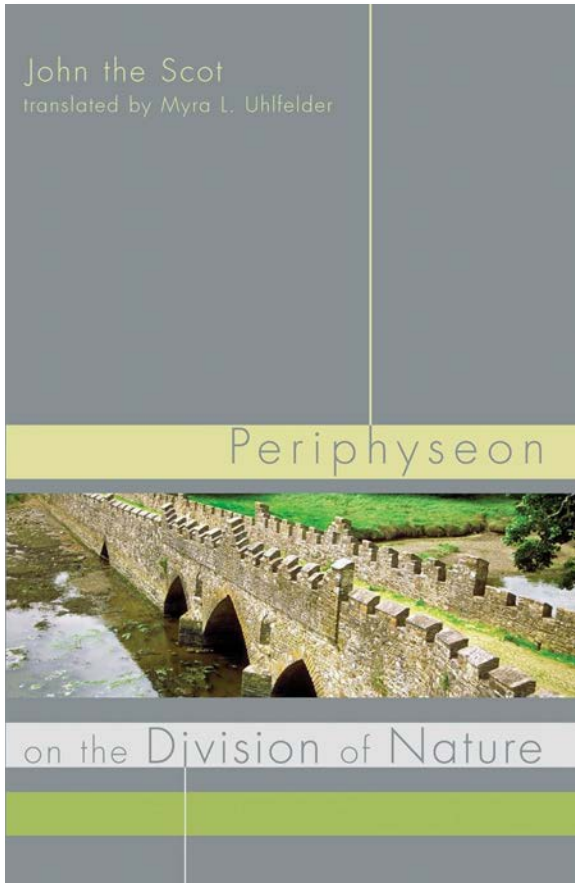


## ***On the Intellect***

Al-Kindi

One of the first Islamic philosophers, Al-Kindi's integration of reason and faith sets an example for how to engage with different worldviews and belief systems. Unless you wish to become a siloed creator or entrepreneur (and I don't think you do, or you wouldn't be reading this list), learning this skill will be critical to your success.





## *Periphyseon*

John Scotus Eriugena

Eriugena's attempt to synthesize Christianity and Neoplatonism (on the surface, read exoterically). But this book, read carefully and insightfully, can serve as an invitation to entrepreneurs to embrace a holistic approach to innovation, emphasizing the synthesis of intellectual rigor and creative intuition to uncover deeper truths and forge meaningful connections in their work.



PENGUIN CLASSICS

EINHARD AND  
NOTKER THE STAMMERER

*Two Lives of Charlemagne*

## *Two Lives of Charlemagne*

Einhard & Notker The Stammerer

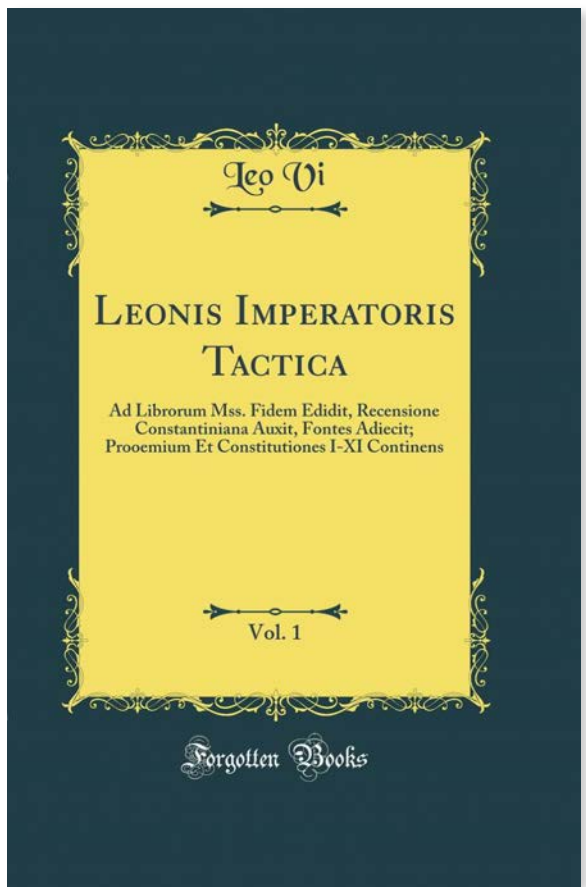
This admiring portrait of the great emperor shows the impact that a strong, unifying leader can have in turbulent times and the importance of relationships. Each writer has a different perspective on the same life (hence the name of the book). How many lives do you lead? On the modern Internet, possibly a million. That's why this book is instructive: understand the role that perspective plays and the importance of biographical detail as a creator in your storytelling process.



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Books From The 10th Century

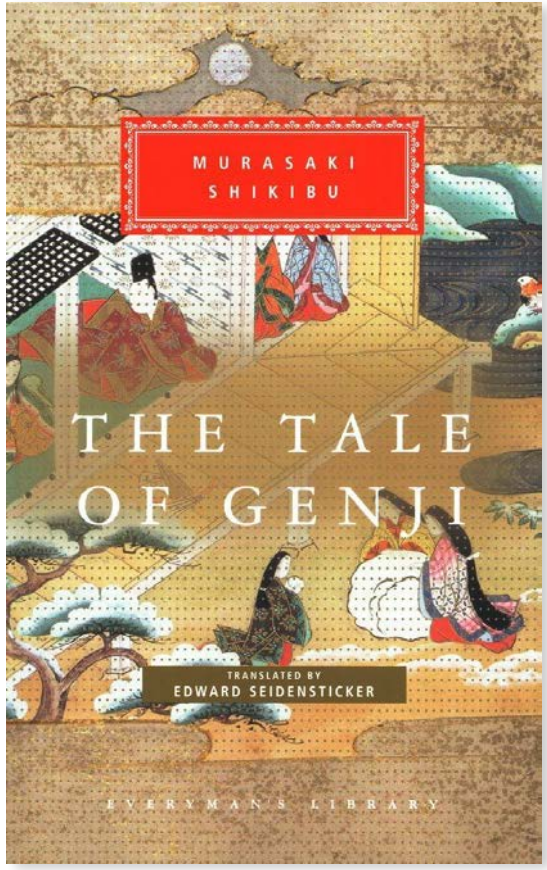
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## ***Tactica***

Emperor Leo VI the Wise

This military manual by a Byzantine emperor distills principles of strategy, tactics, and leadership that can be applied to business as well. I'm generally against the "military strategy" approach to business, on Girardian grounds, but this great work contains multitudes.



# *The Tale of Genji*

Genji Monogatari

Often considered the world's first novel, this Japanese tale of court life is a masterpiece of psychological insight and aesthetic sensitivity and is included in the top 10 books to read for its expression of artistic creativity in the midst of extreme constraints.

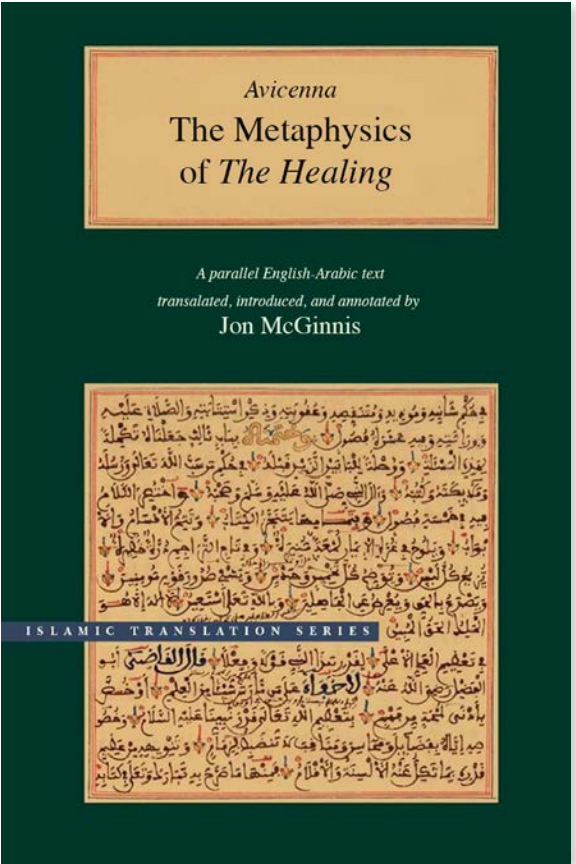




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Books From The 11th Century

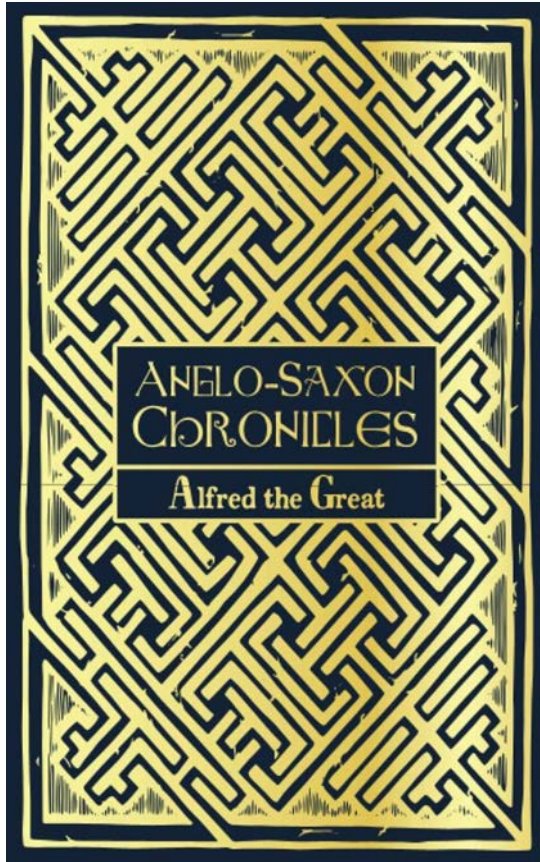
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# The Metaphysics of The Healing

Avicenna

This massive work by one of the greatest Islamic polymaths covers everything from logic and mathematics to theology, demonstrating the interconnectedness of knowledge. For technical people, this book shows the sheer ambition of such a knowledge project. It is one of the most practical books on the list.



## *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*

Alfred The Great

These historical annals provide a window into the tumultuous world of medieval England and the importance of chronicling and learning from the past. The book offers rich insights into the resilience and adaptability of early societies, encouraging entrepreneurs to document their journey meticulously, learn from historical successes and failures, and adapt to changing circumstances to build enduring enterprises.

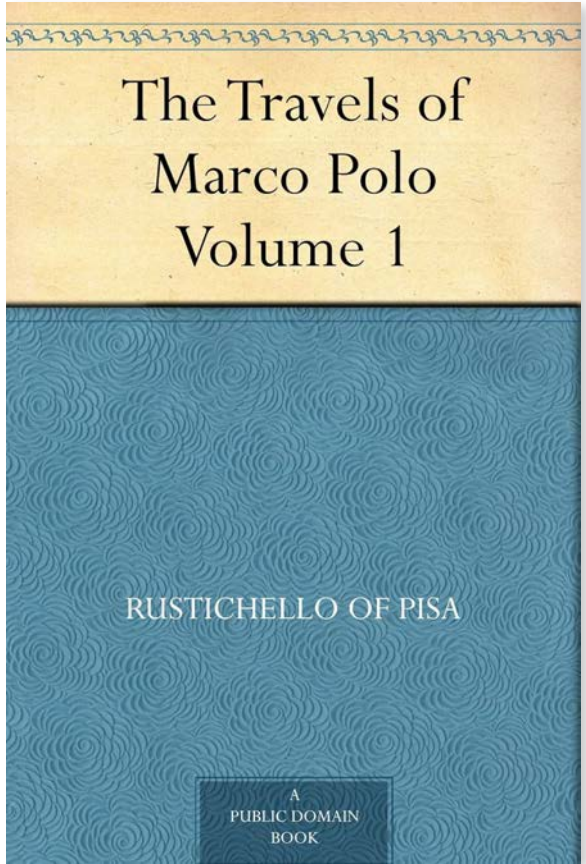


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Books From The 12th Century

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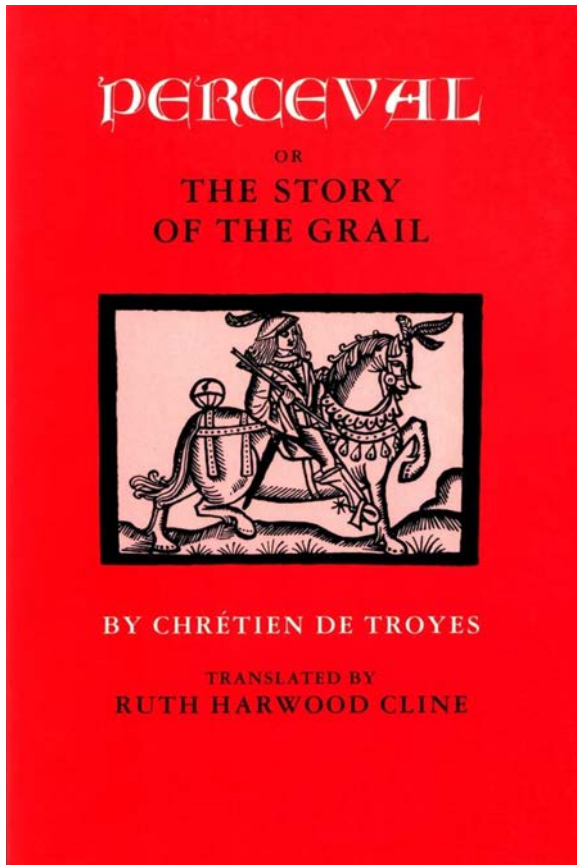


## ***Travels of Marco Polo***

Rustichello da Pisa

The Venetian merchant's epic journey to the court of Kublai Khan in China shows the value of exploring new frontiers with an open and curious mind—and much more.





## *Perceval, the Story of the Grail*

Chrétien de Troyes

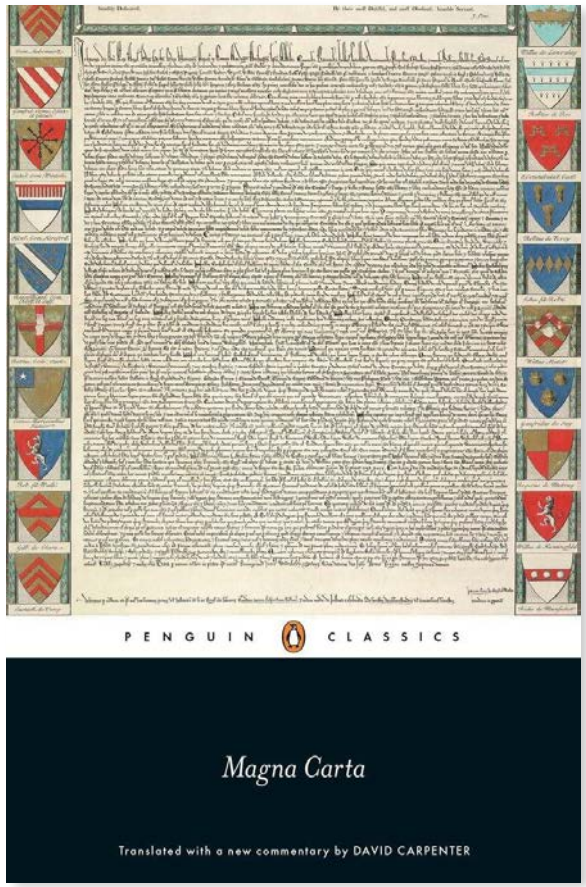
This unfinished romance is an enduring legend of the holy grail, which can symbolize the endless quest for meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. Each of us must define what we believe is our “Holy Grail”, and it’s probably best to do that before we go searching for it. Or do we accept the existence of the thing first, and allow the quest to change us regardless of whether it exists or not?



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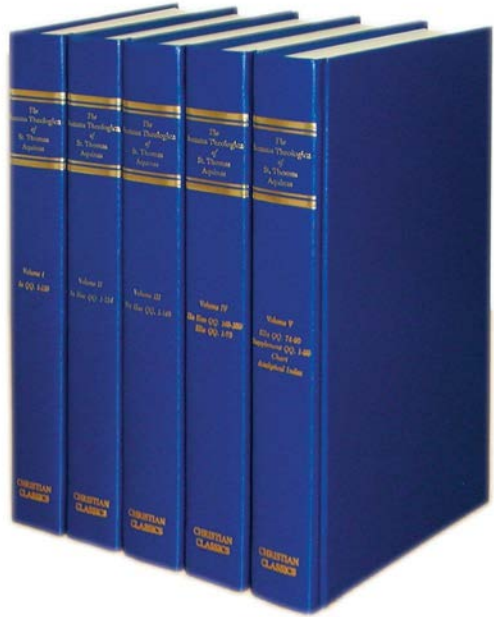
Books From The 13th Century

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## The Magna Carta

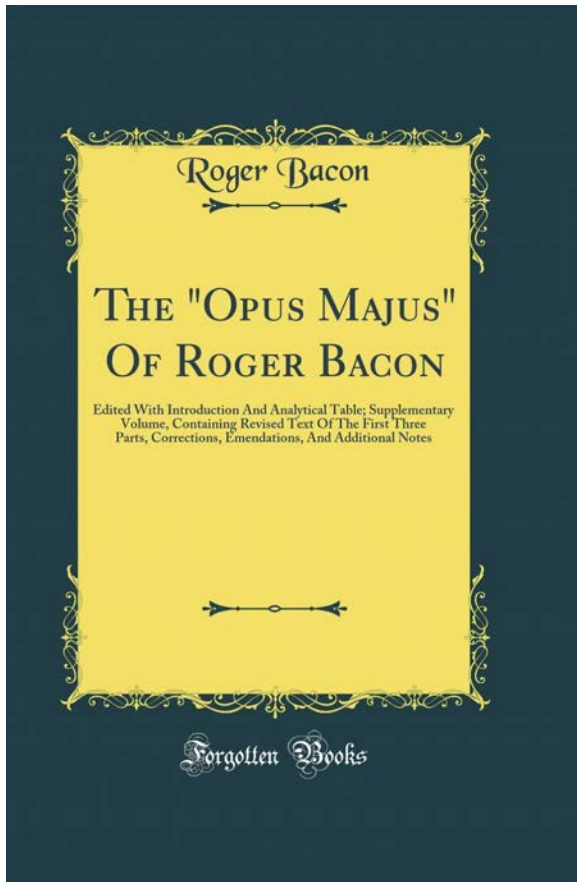
This is the foundational document of individual rights and the rule of law. Could something like this exist anew today? Would that even be beneficial? As we debate questions like general rules related to AI, it's worth revisiting this classic document for clues as to how humanity has generally addressed warring factions and kept the powerful in check.



# *Summa Theologica*

Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas' ambitious synthesis of Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy is a model of rigorous, systematic thinking and the power of integrating faith and reason. I certainly wouldn't expect anyone to read the entire *Summa*, but as many great thinkers have done throughout history: get yourself a leatherbound copy, for posterity, and just crack it open and read a single Question from time to time. You will become a better thinker within a year if you keep a volume nearby.



## *Opus Majus*

Roger Bacon

Bacon's visionary work foresaw the potential of science and technology to transform the world, embodying the innovative spirit—he is an advocate for interdisciplinary knowledge, and shows the benefits of interdisciplinary and unsiloed thinking in the creative process. Bacon can help us get unstuck.

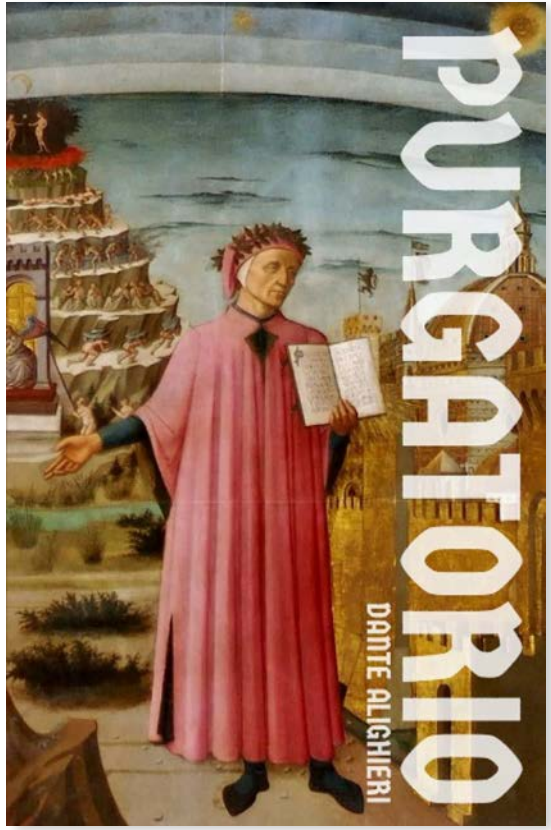




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Books From The 14th Century

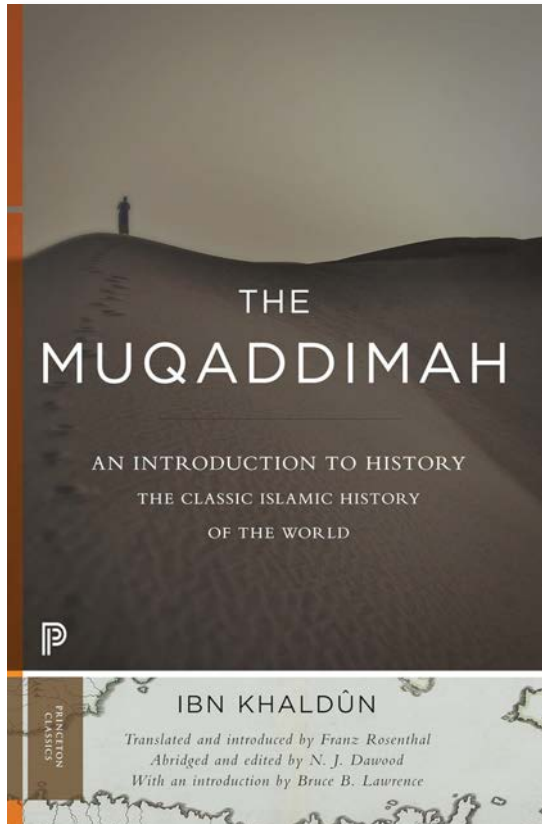
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## ***The Purgatorio***

Dante Alighieri

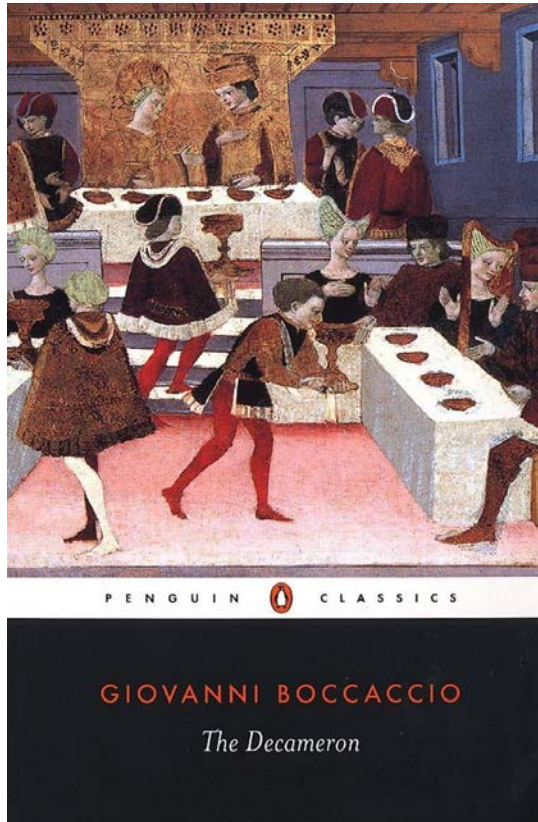
The *Purgatorio* is a profoundly spiritual work, so I would not want anyone to think of it as a “guidebook for creators”. That it is certainly not. The importance of Dante’s work is in showing us how the untangling of his disordered desires happened so that we might have hope of untangling our own. He went ahead of us as our guide to show us the way. We need another Dante. But until he arrives, we have this wonderful poem that illustrates why innovation without conversion leads nowhere—and worse, it might even lead to eternal torment.



## *The Muqaddimah*

Ibn Khaldun

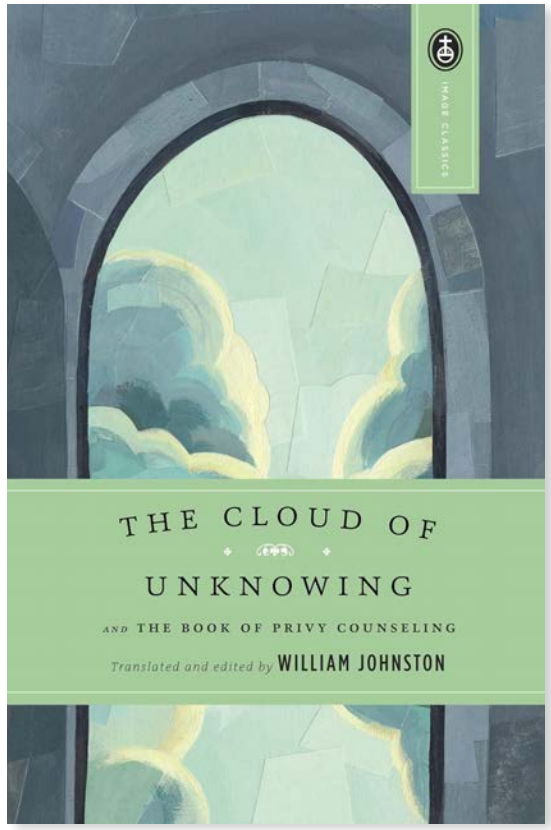
Considered a foundational work of sociology and economics, this Islamic thinker's magnum opus analyzes the rise and fall of civilizations in ways that remains profoundly relevant. History matters. And you and I are shaping it. What is your philosophy of history? Do you know? And how does that philosophy shape your future? Our metaphysical assumptions and commitments matter. This book will help you examine them.



## *The Decameron*

Giovanni Boccaccio

Boccaccio's earthy tales of love and wit, told by characters escaping a plague, find humor and humanity in the midst of disaster. It should not be hard for any astute reader to translate this book's lessons to the modern world and their own life.



## *The Cloud of Knowing*

Unknown Mystic

This mystical Christian text emphasizes the importance of humility, unknowing, and contemplative silence in the pursuit of wisdom. Too often creators start with what is ‘known’, or what they think they know that others don’t know; this profound work makes the case that our growth is directly tied to how much we let go of what we think or thought we knew, and embrace the mystery. As scientism has dominated innovation, this book is more relevant than ever.

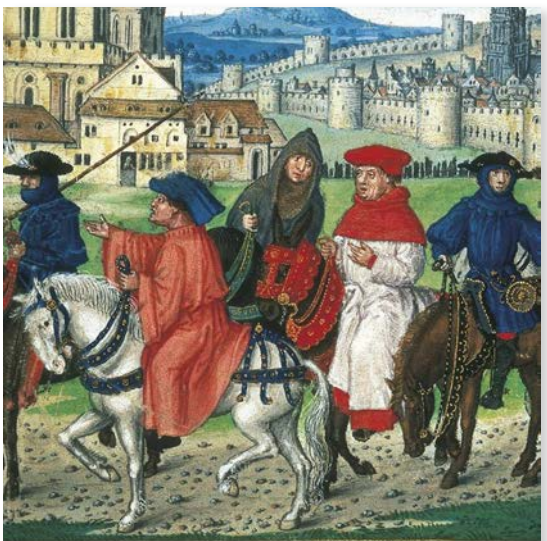




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Books From The 15th Century

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PENGUIN CLASSICS

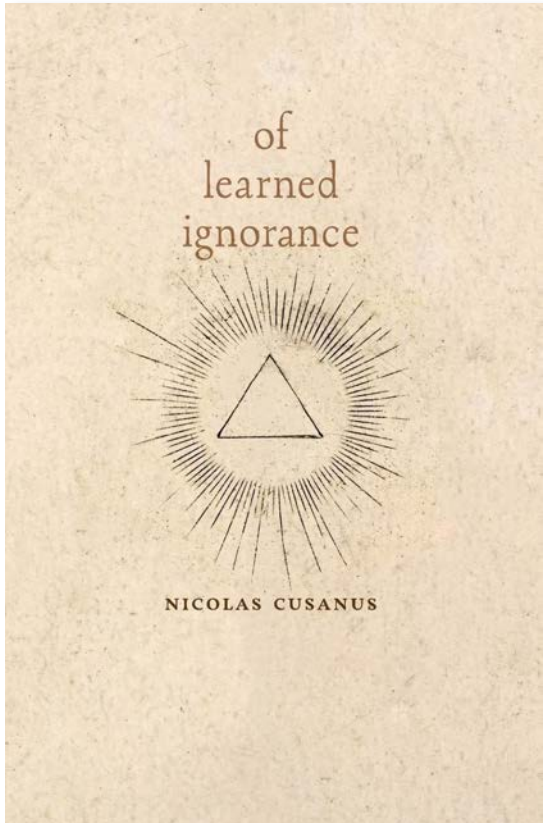
GEOFFREY CHAUCER

THE CANTERBURY TALES

# *The Canterbury Tales*

Geoffrey Chaucer

Chaucer's classic story collection paints a vivid portrait of medieval society and the perennial human comedy. It highlights our shared humanity and offers important lessons on why *who we journey with* matters—and how different people on the same path can have wildly different motivations, or undergo very different types of transformations. (Or no transformation at all.) Read it for the laughs. But read between the lines, and you get a rich tapestry of human experience and wisdom.



## *Of Learned Ignorance*

Nicholas of Cusa

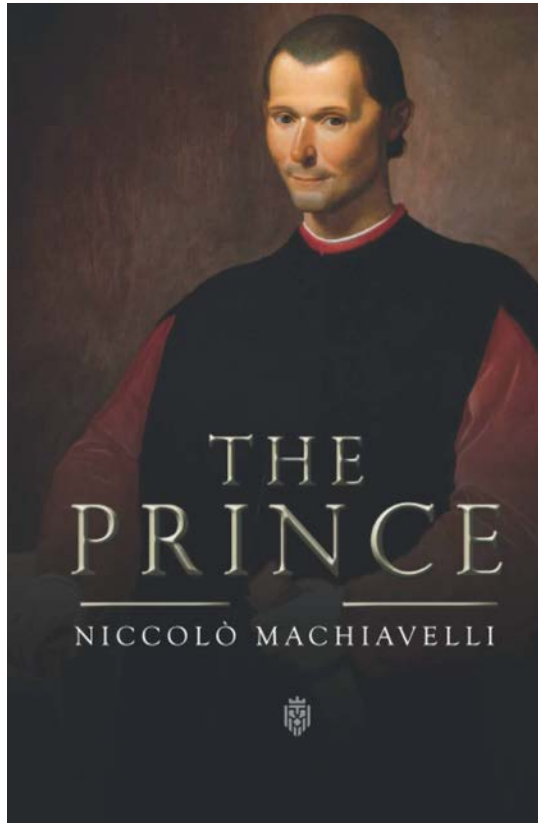
Cusa was known for his philosophy of “learned ignorance” and for recognizing the contradictions between theology and philosophy in the Christian tradition. He is perhaps most well-known for his ‘coincidence of opposites’, the paradoxes that lie at the heart of some of the deepest truths. Perhaps one day somebody will write “On the Errors of the Entrepreneurs”, and I suspect that paradoxes—both good and bad—will lie at the heart of that exploration.



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Books From The 16th Century

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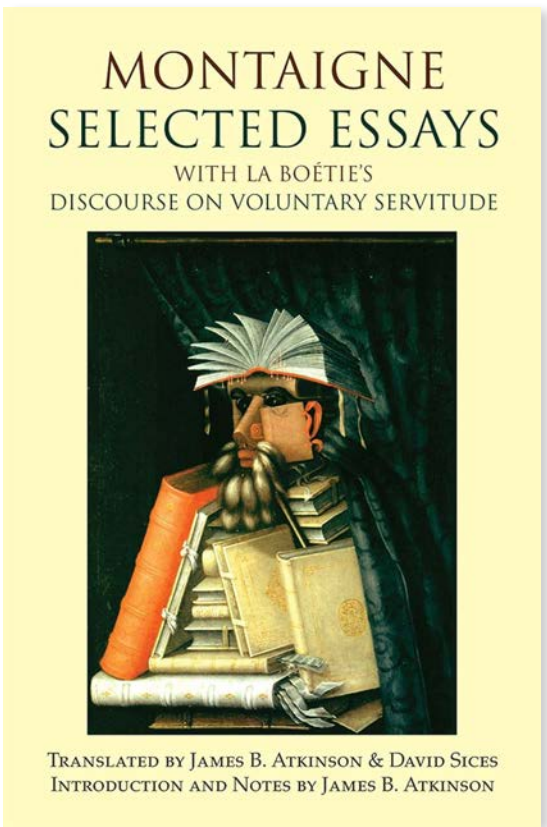


## ***The Prince***

Niccolò Machiavelli

This controversial political treatise, while often associated with ruthlessness, is also a realistic look at what it takes to acquire and maintain power and influence. I am certainly not commending all of its tactics; but at the very least, read it so that you understand how many of the people around you are operating. If you'd like a modern version of this book, simply read Robert Greene. But I always like the original article, the source material.

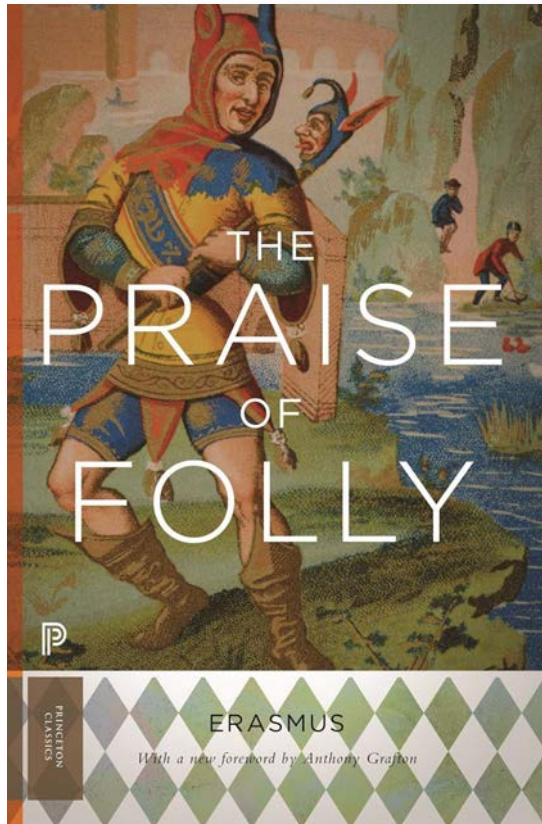




## *Selected Essays*

Montaigne

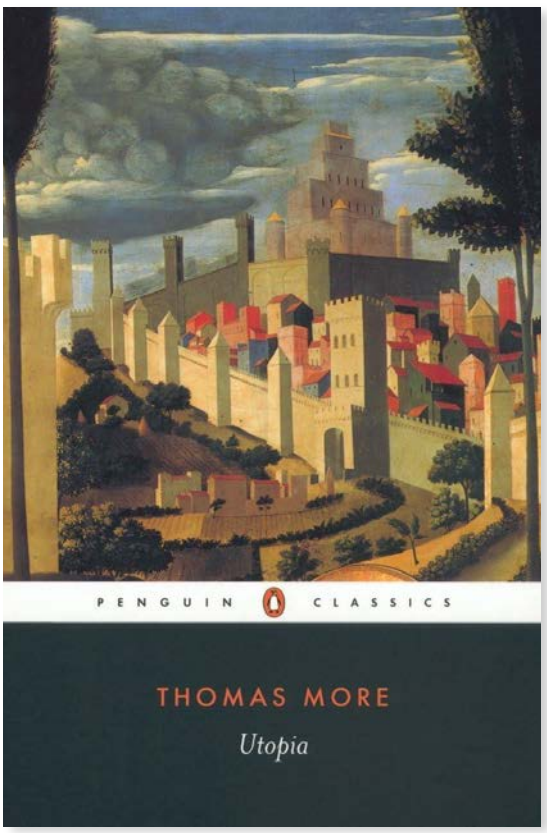
Montaigne's wise and witty reflections on life, death, education, and the human condition model the art of the essay and the examined life.



## ***The Praise of Folly***

Desiderius Erasmus

In this satirical work, Erasmus uses personified Folly to criticize the foolishness and vices of his contemporaries, including the church and aristocracy. Seeing where the folly lies around us is one of the first steps in finding a worthwhile desire to pursue—one that will not eventually lead us into folly. Satire is essential on the creator's journey. This book is one of the best.



## *Utopia*

Thomas More

More's vision of an ideal society, while unrealized, raises penetrating questions about justice, equality, and the trade-offs inherent in any social order.

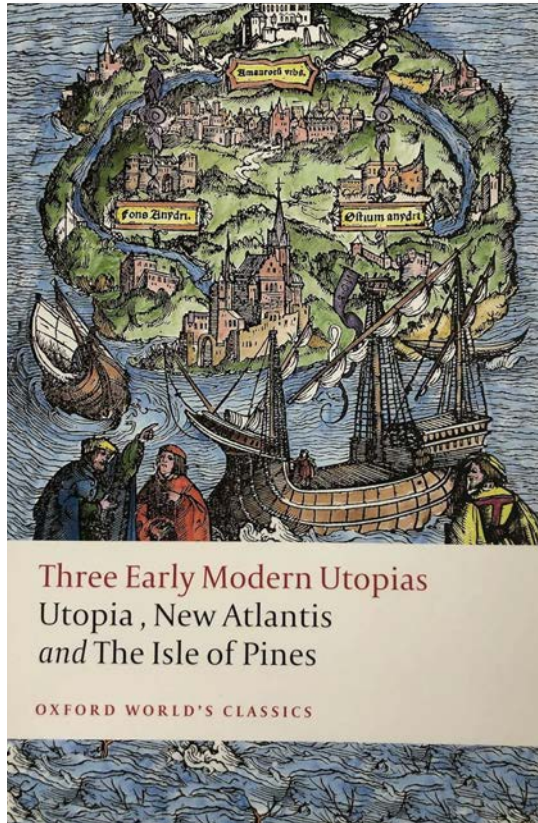


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Books From The 17th Century

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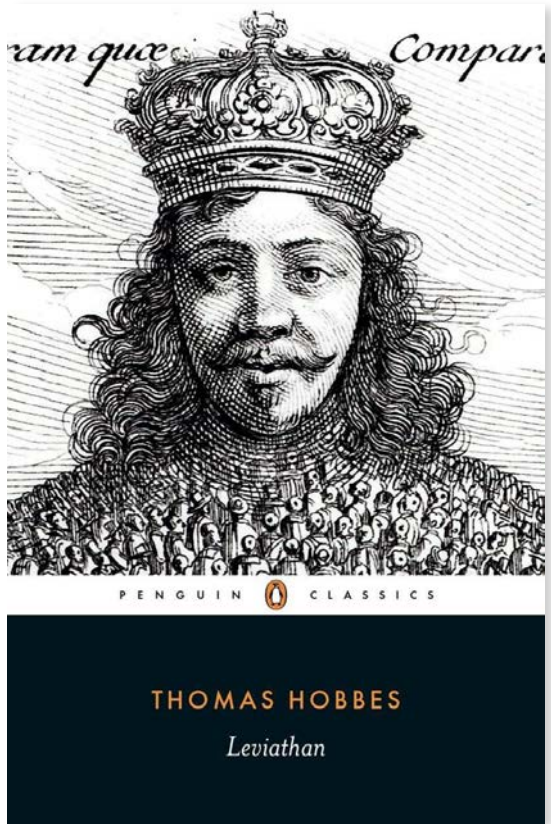


## *New Atlantis*

Francis Bacon

Bacon's utopian novel foreshadows the potential of science and technology to transform society and probes the ethical implications of progress, but it comes with dark warning between the lines. This book should be read and discussed far more than it is.





## *Leviathan*

Thomas Hobbes

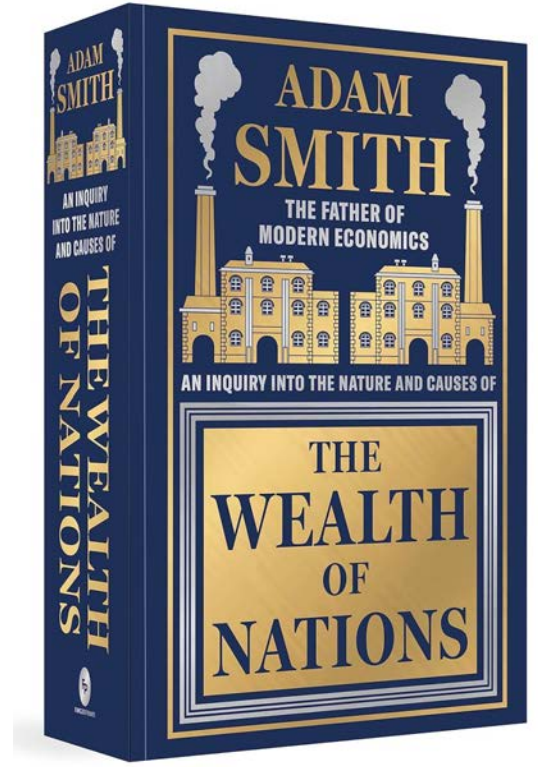
Hobbes' political philosophy, while pessimistic about human nature, advocated for a strong social contract to ensure peace and stability. Today, many people have stopped believing in the effectiveness of a 'social contract'. What, then, will replace it? As we struggle to reimagine the economic and political order, going back to Hobbes' original arguments will be a helpful aid.



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Books From The 18th Century

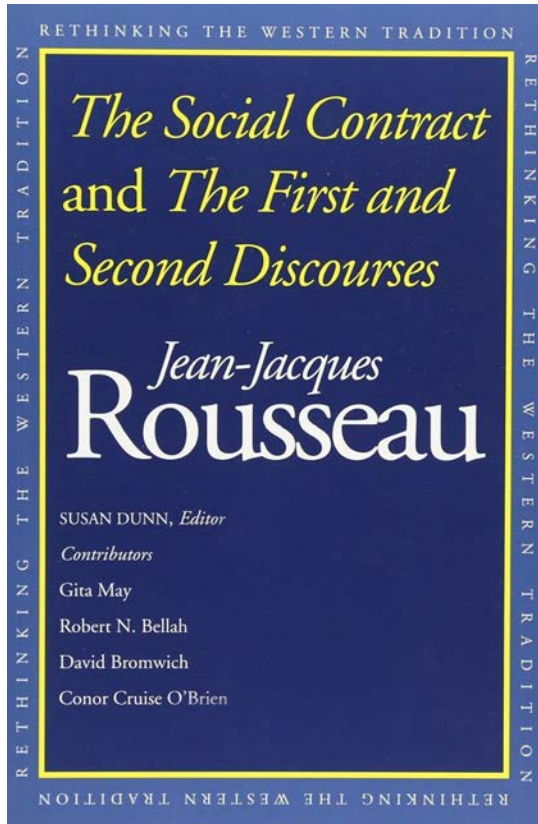
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## *The Wealth of Nations*

Adam Smith

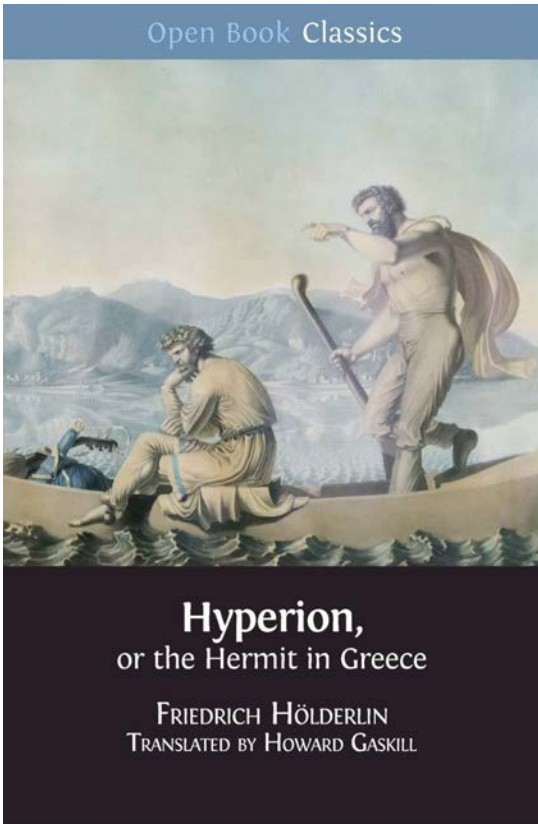
Smith's classic work of economic analysis shaped modern capitalism and the understanding of self-interest as a potential driver of social good. Simply put: everyone should have read this book in high school or college; but if you did not, and even if you did, it was probably read poorly. Revisiting it as an adult is extremely satisfying. This book is particularly interesting when read in the light of Smith's other work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.



## *Rousseau's "First Discourse"*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Rousseau's critique of the Enlightenment and his emphasis on the nobility of the 'savage' challenged assumptions about progress and civilization. Whether you think Rousseau was right or wrong, this book deserves a careful reading because it raises absolutely essential anthropological questions that we must answer. Human nature cannot remain an "unknowable X". Rousseau has opinions. He challenges ours. He's asking questions we must grapple with.



# *Hyperion*

Friedrich Hölderlin

This epistolary novel by one of Germany's greatest poets explores themes of beauty, love, and the search for unity with nature and the divine. "Poetic knowledge" should be more widely sought after and acquired; I often wonder what kind of creators and companies would emerge if it were.





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Books From The 19th Century

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# SELF-RELIANCE AND NATURE



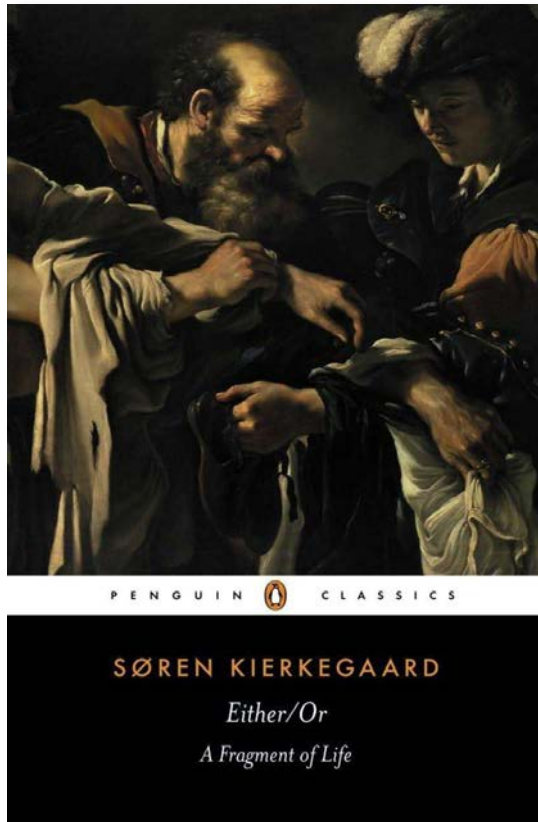
The Complete First and Second Series  
of Emerson's Essays

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

## ***Self-Reliance & Nature***

Ralph Waldo Emerson

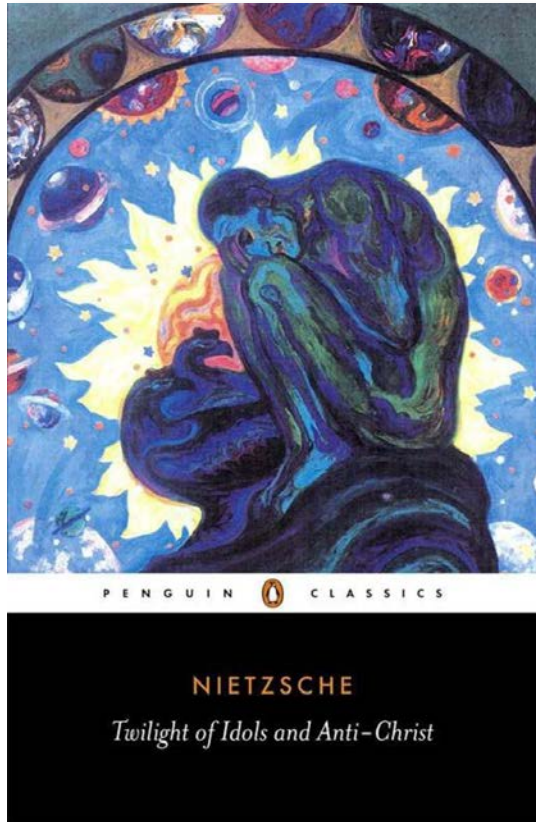
Emerson's stirring essay is a call to trust in one's inner voice, think independently, and have the courage to be unconventional and true to oneself. Whether you think that's hogwash or something to be taken seriously, Emerson's writing is something to contend with. His words and spirit have inspired many Americans over the years and I sense that he will become even more relevant in the coming years as people look for a way to be awakened from technological fatalism.



## *Either/Or*

Soren Kierkegaard

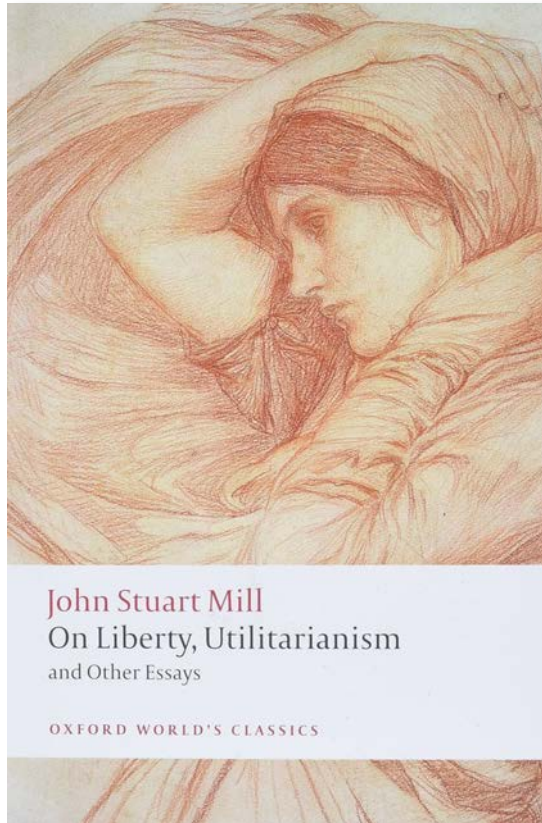
Kierkegaard's influential work explores the aesthetic and ethical stages of existence and the importance of individual choice and commitment to living authentically. His work involves risk-taking, metaphysical commitment, and faith. All of these things are part of the lifeblood of any true creator.



## *Twilight of the Idols*

Nietzsche

In this late work, Nietzsche calls for a reevaluation of all values. “Twilight of the Idols” represents the challenge of our time; it asks some of the key questions that our society is grappling with. Do all entrepreneurs merely “challenge values” and act as contrarians? Are we rejecting the traditions that we have inherited in order to start from scratch building a new morality, and a new humanity, from the ground up? Technology is forcing us to grapple with Nietzsche anew.



## ***On Liberty***

John Stuart Mill

Mill's impassioned defense of individual freedom, diversity of thought, and the free exchange of ideas remains a cornerstone of liberal democratic thought.

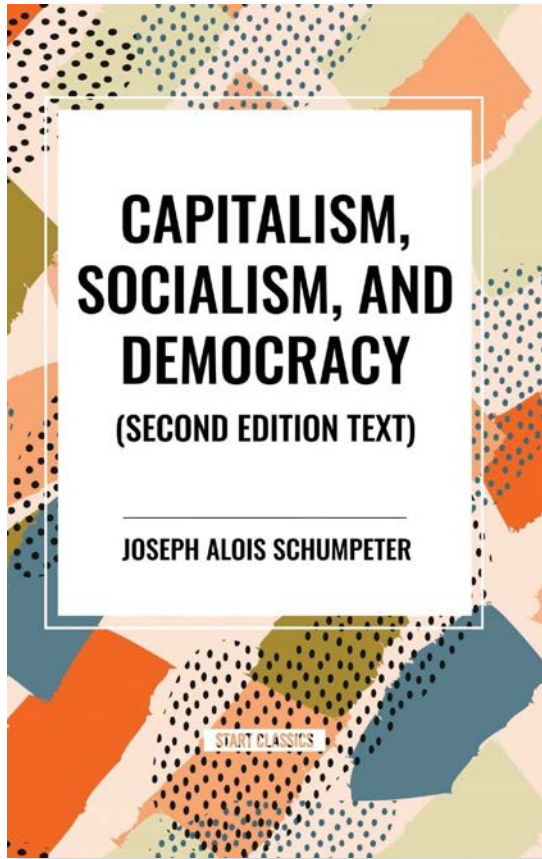




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Books From The 20th Century

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## ***Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy***

Joseph Schumpeter

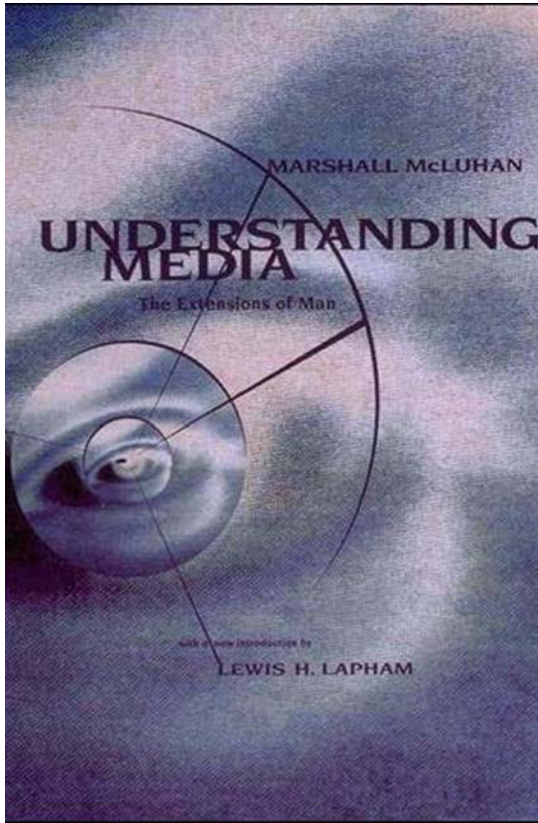
Schumpeter's economic analysis coined the term "creative destruction" to describe innovation's disruptive yet generative power in capitalist economies.



## ***The Courage to Be***

Paul Tillich

Tillich's theological existentialism speaks to the fundamental human struggle to find meaning and purpose in the face of doubt, anxiety, and the threat of nonbeing.



## *Understanding Media*

Marshall McLuhan

McLuhan's groundbreaking analysis of media and technology shows how the medium shapes the message and our perceptions in ways that are still playing out in the digital age.

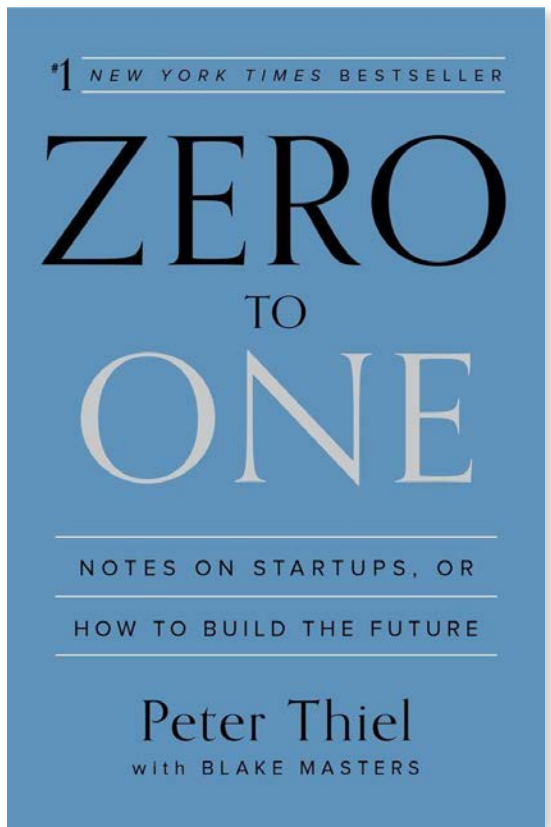


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Books From The 21st Century

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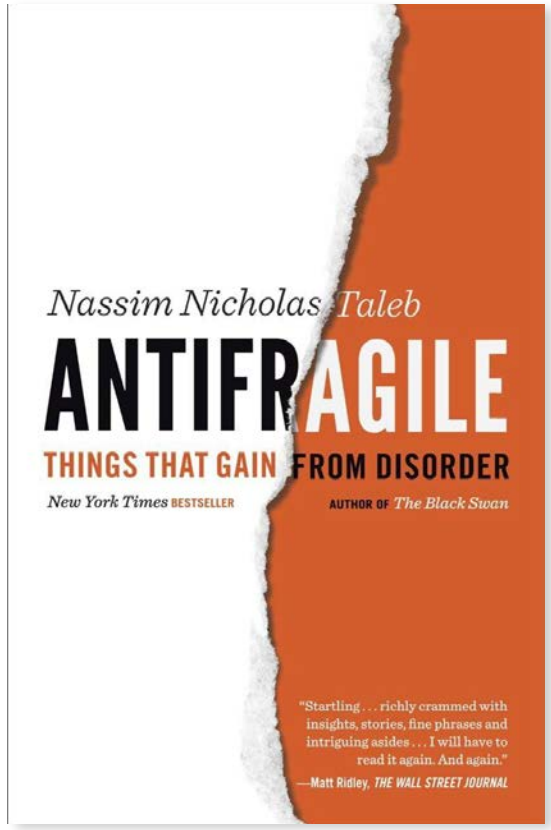




## *Zero to One*

Peter Thiel

Many are building incremental, N+1 things. What does it mean to go from 0 to 1? This book is creation theology, distilled for a Silicon Valley crowd. If read in conjunction with Genesis and Girard, its inner meaning is opened.



## *Antifragile*

Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Taleb's concept of antifragility - things that gain from disorder - has important implications for designing systems, organizations, and lives that thrive under stress. This book will be read 100 years from now.

# Mysterium Tremendum

Luke  Burgis

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