

# The Dream of Reason



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Philosophy, as we know it in the West, began with the Greeks, when people first applied reason to the baffling world of phenomena that surrounded them. For that reason, it is all too often, as the title ironically suggests, a mere "dream." Creatures as irrational as we are can't rely exclusively on our reason, after all. Nadia May's reading of this refreshing history is tuned to Gottlieb's delicate irony as he traces his history from the pre-Socratics to Descartes, though better than three-quarters of the book focuses on the Greeks, especially the pre-Socratics and Gottlieb's beloved Aristotle. (Medieval and Renaissance thinkers are merely a footnote to Aristotle, one would suppose.) Nevertheless, Gottlieb's strength is really storytelling, not philosophy, and the cultural context of his stories. May's reading catches his narrative excitement. She is at once glib, catchy, erudite, but above all entertaining. Stay tuned for Gottlieb's take on the Moderns, which promises to be equally entertaining. P.E.F. © AudioFile 2003, Portland, Maine

In this landmark new study of Western thought, Anthony Gottlieb looks afresh at the writings of the great thinkers, questions much of conventional wisdom, and explains his findings with unbridled brilliance and clarity. From the pre-Socratic philosophers through the celebrated days of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, up to Renaissance

visionaries like Erasmus and Bacon, philosophy emerges here as a phenomenon unconfined by any one discipline. Indeed, as Gottlieb explains, its most revolutionary breakthroughs in the natural and social sciences have repeatedly been co-opted by other branches of knowledge, leading to the illusion that philosophers never make any progress.

From the physics of angels to Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, Gottlieb builds through example and anecdote a vivid portrait of the human drive for understanding. After finishing *The Dream of Reason*, listeners will be graced with a fresh appreciation of the philosophical quest, its entertaining and bizarre byways, and its influence on every aspect of life.

作者介绍:

Anthony Gottlieb is Executive Editor of the *Economist*, formerly science editor of *The Economist*, he studied philosophy at Cambridge University and University College London, and has been a Visiting Fellow at Harvard University. He writes regularly for the *New York Times Book Review*, and is the author of a short book, *Socrates*.

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