



# Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher

By Peter Stanlis

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**Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher** By Peter Stanlis

Robert Frost is by far the most celebrated major American poet of the twentieth century. In part, this is because his poetry seems, on the surface, to be so accessible, even homey. But Frost was not just a powerful writer of popular lyric and narrative verse, argues Peter J. Stanlis in this major contribution to American literary study and philosophy. Rather, his work is deeply rooted in a complex philosophical dualism that opposes both idealistic monism, centered in spirit, and scientific positivism, which posits that the universe can be understood as nothing but matter.

In *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*, Stanlis shows how Frost's philosophical dualism of spirit and matter is perceived through metaphors and applied to science, religion, art, education, and society. He further argues that Frost's dualism provides a critique of the monistic forces that were instrumental in the triumph of twentieth-century totalitarianism. Thoroughly informed by his twenty-three year friendship and correspondence with Frost, Stanlis's landmark volume is the first attempt to deal with the poet's philosophy in a systematic manner. It will appeal not only to fans of Frost but to all who understand poetry as a form of revelation for understanding human nature.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Making good use of his decades-long friendship and correspondence with Frost, Stanlis traces Frost's influences and his approach to such thinkers as Darwin, the Huxleys, Lovejoy, Einstein, and innovators in disciplines ranging from the arts to education. This is essential reading for both scholars and students."—*Book News*

"Stanlis does not contend that Frost was a systematic philosopher....Rather he depicts him as someone who starts with certain perceptions about reality, a series of insights that he seeks to confirm through study and conversation and which he puts into verse that would become an honored part of the American literary heritage."—*Society Magazine*

"Stanlis, who knew and spoke with Frost on and off between 1939 and the poet's death...is best known as the formidable scholar of 18th-century literature whose *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (1958) revolutionized our understanding of Burke. Now, in *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*, he has performed a similar task, producing a book that may well reshape our understanding of Frost....Amply footnoted, and buttressed by an impressive bibliography of secondary sources, *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher* offers much-needed clarity on a man whose life and work have been too long shrouded in confusion. Stanlis has produced a landmark work that will prove essential to future readers who seek to understand Robert Frost."— James E. Person Jr., *National Review*

#### About the Author

Peter J. Stanlis is Distinguished Professor of Humanities, Emeritus, at Rockford College. The author of *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, which appeared in 1955 and revolutionized the way Burke was viewed by scholars, he promised Frost in 1944 that he would someday write the best book about Frost's art and thought that he had it in him to write. Stanlis's previous monograph on Frost is titled *Robert Frost: The Individual and Society*.

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