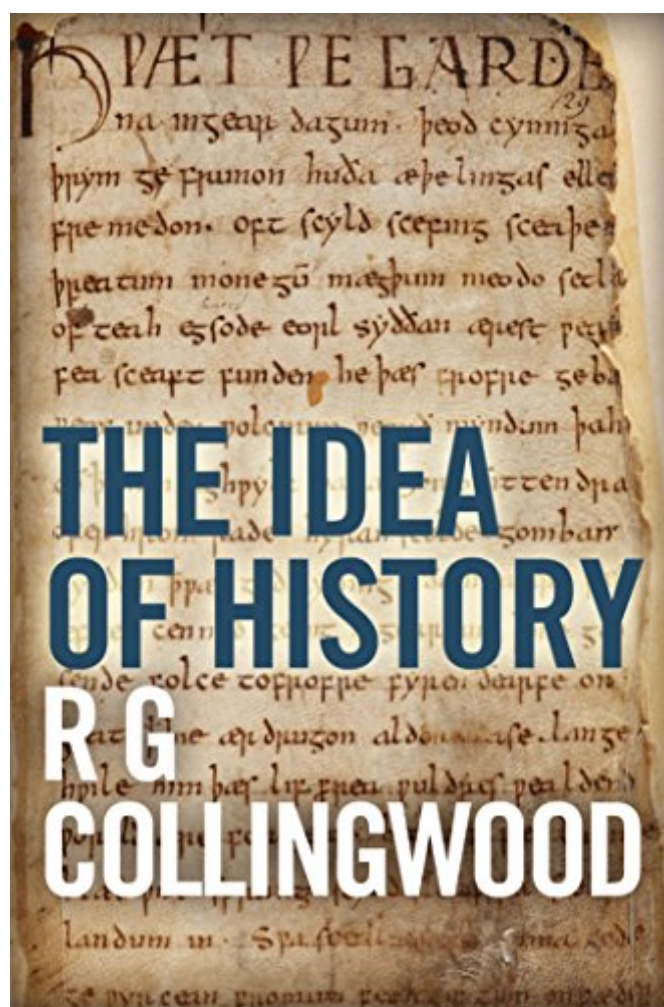


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The Idea Of History



Synopsis

The name "philosophy of history" was invented in the eighteenth century by Voltaire, who meant by it no more than critical or scientific history, a type of historical thinking in which the historian made up his mind for himself instead of repeating whatever stories he found in old books. For many years before his death in 1943, R. G. Collingwood, who was both a Professor of Philosophy at Oxford and a practicing historian, was engaged in what he intended as a major contribution to the philosophy of history. *The Idea of History*, first published in 1946, was this contribution. It became a canonical text, and linked the practise of philosophical thought with the job of the historian to place themselves in the minds of those men whose deeds he was placing into a context. Four parts of the book describe how the modern idea of history has developed. Collingwood begins with the Greeks and Romans, writing of Livy, Tacitus, Herodotus and Thucydides, then progressing to the early modern period throughout Europe and focussing in turn on each of the main centres of historical thought: Italy, Germany, France and England. A final section consists of a number of essays on such subjects as the nature of history, historical method, historical evidence, and progress, which show a great depth in study which is written in engaging and methodical prose. "The wit of [Collingwood's] learning and the many-sidedness of his gifts as a philosopher, scholar and artist are manifest...an example of scholarship and depth presented with ease and grace." Hans Kohn, *New York Times* "A pleasure to read, a first-hand, enlightening, and intellectually stimulating treatment of a philosophically important subject...It has been a long time since I have encountered a contemporary work of which as much could properly be said...There is much to be learned from it." Arthur E. Murphy, *The Philosophical Review*

R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943) was a philosopher and historian, and also worked on books concerning archaeology. Albion Press is an imprint of Endeavour Press, the UK's leading independent digital publisher. For more information on our titles please sign up to our newsletter at www.endeavourpress.com. Each week you will receive updates on free and discounted ebooks. Follow us on Twitter: @EndeavourPress and on Facebook via <http://on.fb.me/1HweQV7>. We are always interested in hearing from our readers. Endeavour Press believes that the future is now.

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Customer Reviews

History is not a scientific process of cutting and pasting events into a sequence based upon testimony. History is an active mental evaluation of what took place and why it took place. It is the mind considering its thoughts. Collingwood begins with an introduction to history and its philosophy. History is more than events. It involves thoughts. "Philosophy is reflective. The philosophizing mind never simply thinks about an object, it always, while thinking about any object, thinks also about its own thought about that object" (1). This philosophy of history goes back to the Greeks who placed mathematics at the center of the picture (4). Since that time there have been "two great constructive ages of European history": the Middle Ages and the 16-19th centuries. The Middle ages were concerned with theology. The 16th-19th centuries were concerned with the laying down of the foundations for natural science. Collingwood asks four questions about history and then seeks to answer them with answers that the populous would term acceptable. What is history? What is it about? How does it proceed? What is it for? His answers are: 1. History is a kind of research or inquiry (science) (9) 2. seeking to find out answers about human actions done in the past 3. accomplished by the interpretation of evidence 4. for the furthering of human self knowledge. He then moves into an evaluation of historical thought beginning with the Greeks. Originally history was merely myth and theological. It was a theocratic history - intent on understanding the god in question (14-15). "Myth, on the contrary, is not concerned with human actions at all" (15). There are no human characters, only gods. Scientific history arose and took prominence with Herodotus.

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