



A History of Philosophy, Vol. 8: Modern Philosophy, Empiricism, Idealism, and Pragmatism in Britain and America

Frederick Charles Copleston

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Conceived originally as a serious presentation of the development of philosophy for Catholic seminary students, Frederick Copleston's nine-volume *A History Of Philosophy* has journeyed far beyond the modest purpose of its author to universal acclaim as the best history of philosophy in English.

Copleston, an Oxford Jesuit of immense erudition who once tangled with A. J. Ayer in a fabled debate about the existence of God and the possibility of metaphysics, knew that seminary students were fed a woefully inadequate diet of theses and proofs, and that their familiarity with most of history's great thinkers was reduced to simplistic caricatures. Copleston set out to redress the wrong by writing a complete history of Western philosophy, one crackling with incident and intellectual excitement -- and one that gives full place to each thinker, presenting his thought in a beautifully rounded manner and showing his links to those who went before and to those who came after him.

The result of Copleston's prodigious labors is a history of philosophy that is unlikely ever to be surpassed. *Thought* magazine summed up the general agreement among scholars and students alike when it reviewed Copleston's *A History of Philosophy* as "broad-minded and objective, comprehensive and scholarly, unified and well proportioned... We cannot recommend [it] too highly."

A History of Philosophy, Vol. 8: Modern Philosophy, Empiricism, Idealism, and Pragmatism in Britain and America Details

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Dave Peticolas says

James F says

The eighth of the nine volumes of Father Copleston's history, this covers nineteenth and early twentieth century British philosophy, with an "epilogue" on Wittgenstein and the ordinary language philosophers to bring it up to the present of the book. (It actually ends with an "appendix" on John Henry Newman, which lets you know where the author is coming from.) The volume begins with Bentham and the Utilitarians, followed by a few empiricists such as Herbert Spencer, and ends with Peirce, James, Dewey, Moore and Russell, in each case with related philosophers of the same "movement". In between, however, about half the book covers very minor figures, the British idealists (e.g. T.H. Greene, F.H. Bradley, Bernard Bosanquet, etc.), who have already been totally forgotten and whom even a philosophy major would probably have to google. Copleston himself, despite his affinity as a Catholic for idealist philosophy that takes religion seriously, admits their relative unimportance, and the treatment is somewhat perfunctory and repetitious; he says almost the same thing about many of them in more or less the same words, makes the same arguments for and against, and in general if this hadn't been written before the computer era I would say he used "copy" and "paste" a good deal. The result is probably the least interesting of all the volumes. Of course, this may also be because I knew more about the later philosophers, having taken a course in Peirce, James and Dewey and read a good deal of Russell, for example, and Copleston's treatment is not as insightful as when he is talking about mediaeval or early modern philosophy. This volume especially toward the end is also full of statements that begin, "the present writer does not intent to assert. . ." and distances himself from whatever he is arguing for or against in the philosophers he is writing about; perhaps his duties as a Jesuit priest weigh more heavily when he is talking about still current ideas. In short, not as good as his earlier volumes and certainly there are better treatments of the major figures, but I am glad I read the sections on the minor ones because these are not anyone I will ever actually read, even if my lifetime should be extended by a another century or so.

Doutor Branco says

A very compendious, but very efficient historical narrative.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

A History of Philosophy 8: Modern Philosophy (A History of Philosophy #8), Frederick Charles Copleston
A History of Philosophy is an eleven-volume history of Western philosophy written by English Jesuit priest Frederick Charles Copleston.

Volume 8: Bentham to Russell: British Empiricism (including John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer); The Idealist Movement in Great Britain (including Francis Herbert Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet); Idealism in America (including Josiah Royce); The Pragmatist Movement (including Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey); The Revolt Against Idealism (including George Edward Moore and Bertrand Russell).

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