



The Sense of the Past: Essays in the History of Philosophy

Bernard Williams

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Before his death in 2003, Bernard Williams planned to publish a collection of historical essays, focusing primarily on the ancient world. This posthumous volume brings together a much wider selection, written over some forty years. His legacy lives on in this masterful work, the first collection ever published of Williams's essays on the history of philosophy. The subjects range from the sixth century B.C. to the twentieth A.D., from Homer to Wittgenstein by way of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Sidgwick, Collingwood, and Nietzsche. Often one would be hard put to say which part is history, which philosophy. Both are involved throughout, because this is the history of philosophy written philosophically. Historical exposition goes hand in hand with philosophical scrutiny. Insights into the past counteract blind acceptance of present assumptions.

In his touching and illuminating introduction, Myles Burnyeat writes of these essays: "They show a depth of commitment to the history of philosophy seldom to be found nowadays in a thinker so prominent on the contemporary philosophical scene."

The result celebrates the interest and importance to philosophy today of its near and distant past.

The Sense of the Past is one of three collections of essays by Bernard Williams published by Princeton University Press since his death. *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument*, selected, edited, and with an introduction by Geoffrey Hawthorn, and *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, selected, edited, and with an introduction by A. W. Moore, make up the trio.

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