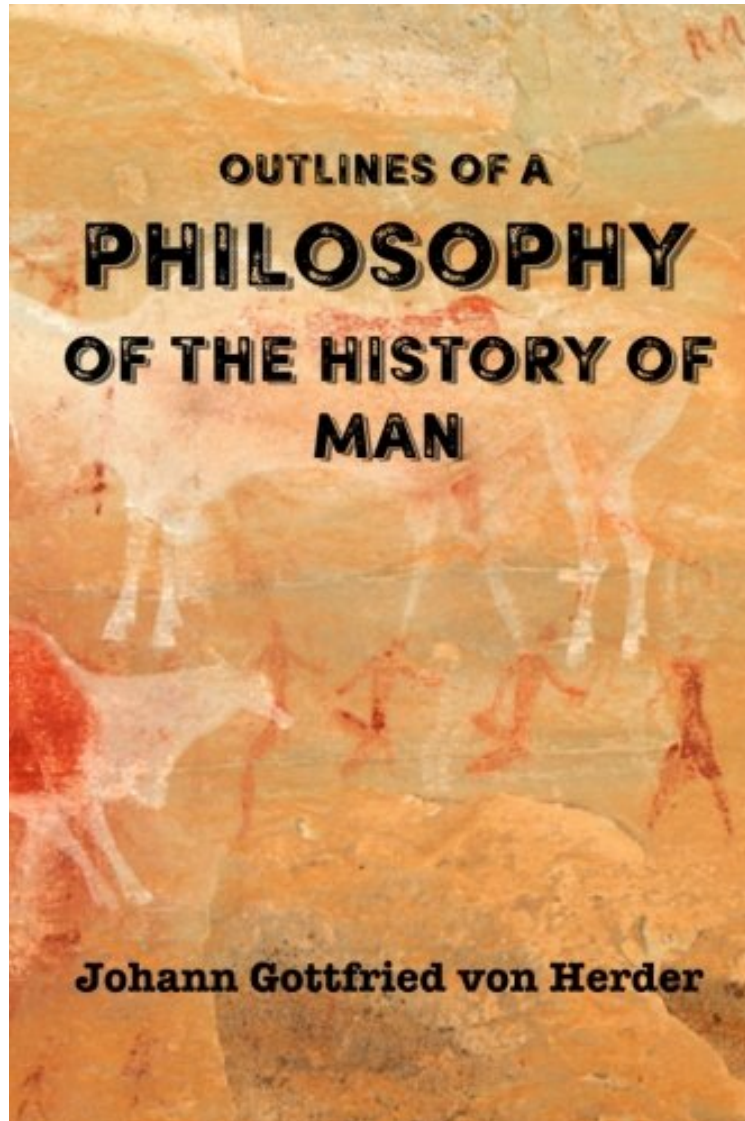


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Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man

Johann Gottfried von Herder

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Johann Gottfried von Herder : Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man:

Everything that could blossom upon Earth has blossomed, each in its due season and its proper sphere; it has withered away and will blossom again when its time arrives. So says Herder of civilizations, using one of his favorite

metaphors. His pre-Darwin Hegelian teleology sounds quaint at times, but at the same time allows him to hold some amazingly modern sentiments. For example, he repudiates slavery and the mistreatment of different races, and makes an appeal to understand them without filtering them through our own conceptual schemes; he realizes the genetic source of all changes and speaks of our assuredly future abilities to genetically manipulate organisms. And yet, he can be shockingly dated: he constantly refers to Western Europeans as those having the perfect form as opposed to those in say, Africa, whose form is genetically degenerate. He, at times, writes as if he is on the verge of propounding a theory of evolution while still referring constantly to the Creator, being ambiguous as to whether this is god or nature, while seeming at times to accept and at others to reject a form of Lamarckism, and finally to disavow an organism's ability to change its form or falsify its figure (say, from dog to wolf), though admitting that in the past the species may not have been as separate as they are now. If we can forgive him his European-centric viewpoint we are left with a fascinating Enlightenment viewpoint of historical progress, together with some cogent rules and pithy axioms that attempt to understand the mysterious movements of history. This is a well-formatted version of T. Churchill's translation of Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, first published in London in 1800.