

Ernst Kantorowicz: The Life and Legacy of a Medieval Studies Luminary



Ernst Kantorowicz: A Life by Beth Macy

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
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Ernst Kantorowicz (1895-1963) was one of the most influential historians of the Middle Ages in the 20th century. A German-born Jewish scholar, Kantorowicz fled the Nazis in 1933 and eventually settled in the United States, where he taught at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. His groundbreaking work on the medieval concept of kingship, *The King's Two Bodies*, is considered a classic in the field.

Kantorowicz was born on May 4, 1895, in Posen, Germany. His father was a physician and his mother was a pianist. Kantorowicz showed an early interest in history and literature, and he began studying at the University of Berlin in 1914. He served in the German army during World War I, and after the war he resumed his studies at the University of Heidelberg, where he earned his doctorate in 1921.

After graduating from Heidelberg, Kantorowicz taught at the University of Hamburg and the University of Frankfurt. In 1933, he was dismissed from his position at Frankfurt after the Nazis came to power. Kantorowicz fled Germany and eventually settled in England, where he taught at the Warburg Institute. In 1939, he moved to the United States, where he taught at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Institute for Advanced Study.

Kantorowicz's work on the medieval concept of kingship was groundbreaking. In *The King's Two Bodies*, published in 1957, Kantorowicz argued that the medieval king had two bodies: a natural body and a political body. The natural body was the mortal body of the king, while the political body was the immortal body of the kingdom. Kantorowicz's theory has been influential in shaping our understanding of the medieval monarchy and its role in society.

Kantorowicz also wrote extensively on other aspects of medieval history, including the history of law, the history of ideas, and the history of art. He was a prolific scholar, and his work has had a profound impact on the field of medieval studies.

Kantorowicz died on September 21, 1963, in Princeton, New Jersey. He was 68 years old.

Legacy

Ernst Kantorowicz is considered one of the most important historians of the Middle Ages in the 20th century. His work has had a profound impact on the field of medieval studies, and his legacy continues to inspire scholars today.

Kantorowicz's work on the medieval concept of kingship is still considered a classic in the field. His theory of the king's two bodies has been influential in shaping our understanding of the medieval monarchy and its role in society. Kantorowicz's work on other aspects of medieval history, such as the history of law, the history of ideas, and the history of art, has also been influential.

Kantorowicz was a brilliant scholar and a gifted teacher. He was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the British Academy. He was also awarded the Balzan Prize for History in 1961.

Kantorowicz's work continues to be read and studied by scholars today. His legacy as one of the most important historians of the Middle Ages is secure.

Further Reading

- *Ernst Kantorowicz: The Life of an Intellectual Maverick* by Nancy Partner
- *The King's Two Bodies: A Study of Medieval Political Theology* by Ernst Kantorowicz
- Ernst Kantorowicz at Encyclopedia Britannica



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