

History

History (1) that is written

(2) that is written about

(1) expresses knowledge of (2)

Obscurity, not because of lack of good historians

not because historians do not know what to do

but because history is a matter of knowledge

what it is to know is obscure

Gerhard Ebeling^{of}, Word and Faith, p. 49

unquestionable that a theoretically unquestionable account of critical

history is not available

Nature and History

distance traversed in uniform movement

Time: number and measure of motion; three o'clock; three hours;

important for historian: he has to date his events

but easily involves one in notion of time as succession of points, instants

Now: are there many or just one now

in so far as there is succession, there is multiplicity

in so far as there one identical thing that moves, identity

identity in difference

eliminates mere succession on instants

brings us to psychological experience of time

One subject, many acts, identical or different objects

if objects changing rapidly, ^{unexpectedly,} time is whirligig

if objects changing slowly and in expected fashion, time slow

Hence psychological present is a time span: not succession of profiles but Gestalt

advertises to its past through memories not succession of notes but melody

advertises to its future through forecasts anticipations

uses the past as a guide for the future

Amnesia one does not know who one is, what are one's obligations, what are one's

rights, what is one's occupation, where one lives, etc.

Human living is informed by meaning

Human beings living in groups have their living informed by common meaning

Common meaning develops over the centuries, the millenia

also it can degenerate into mere ideological warfare

out of touch - no common field of experience

no common understanding - misunderstanding distrust fear hatred violence

no common judgements - living in different worlds

no common goals - working at cross purposes

Nature and history differ

because nature proceeds according to universal laws

but history is informed by the particular meanings and values of each particular people

Historical knowledge and historical experience

Knowledge is a matter of experiencing, understanding, and judging

Hence historical knowledge is a compound of historical experience

historical understanding

historical judging

All of us have historical experience, all our experience is historical experience

but that does not make us historians

for the relevant experience is not that of one man or one woman

but that of all the people concerned

the relevant understanding is not the ideas that we have about what is going on

for the course of history depends not only on people's ideas and intentions

but also on their mistakes oversights failures to act

the relevant judgements are not the judgements that people can make today

but they arise from a series of interlocking discoveries that piece together

all the evidence that can be collected from many witnesses

and from not intentions but results

Approach to history

exceptional new

Diary: day by day one records not everything but what seems important significant

one omits what is too familiar to be noticed, too obvious to be mentioned,

too recurrent to be thought worth recording

Memoirs: as years pass and diary swells

what had been remote possibilities, now are realities

earlier events, thought insignificant, now reveal their importance

what was thought important, now appears of no moment

So omitted events have to be recalled, to supply the context of the earlier period

and to make intelligible the subsequent course of events

earlier judgements have to be revised, complemented, corrected, qualified

So one shifts from diary to memoirs

one enlarges one's sources: collecting letters and other material

one racks one's memory, recalling the Sixtz im Leben, reconstructing

As in interpretation here too there gradually are built up contexts of qq & aa

defined by themes and on a higher level by topics

there emerges an overall view, a perspective that was not apparent on the day to day

a book becomes organized = paragraphs sections chapters

view

Biography aims at much the same goal

where autobiographer speaks in first person, biographer in third

where autobiographer can rely on memory, biographer has to do research

where autobiographer may be embarrassed, biographer may speak freely

where autobiographer does not speak in light of later events, the biographer

can draw on them to reveal his subject as more, or alternatively, less profound

wise astute far-sighted than one otherwise would have thought

where autobiographer can write for his own generation, biographer usually

is writing for another generation and so writes not only a life but a life and times

While in biography the "times are treated to illuminate the life,"

in history the perspective is reversed: lives are incidental to the times,

the object is the social cultural process, what is going forward in a community

In biography so too in history one proceeds from research to interpretation and

on the context of events

But in history the material is far more extensive

it may call for specialization in this or that scientific field

the range of topics is far more extensive

Pre-critical History

The community is one's own

Its vehicle is narrative: who did what, when, where, under what circumstances,

from what motives, with what results

Its function is practical: a group can function as a group only if it possesses

an identity, knowing itself as a group, devoting itself to its own improvement,

to remedying its ills, and to raising its hopes.

Pre-critical history is out to promote such knowledge and devotion

It is artistic: it selects orders describes, it awakens readers interest,

seeks to persuade and convince

It is ethical: it praises and blames

It is explanatory: it accounts for institutions by reciting their origins and develop

It is apologetic: it corrects false or tendentious accounts of a people's past

and refutes the calumnies of neighboring and unfriendly peoples

It is prophetic: it knows its people's weaknesses, the dangers that can threaten them,

and it warns and forearms its readers.

Weakness of Precritical History

Excellent inasmuch as communications, development of community, etc.
 Weakness is that it is doing too many different things at once
 It is not a functional speciality concentrated on a single goal
 Leopold von Ranke, wie es eigentlich gewesen, what really happened

Critical History

Not just finding testimonies, checking them for credibility, stringing them together
 That yields only historical experience -- falls short of hist underst and hist knowl
 Collingwood : scissors and paste notion of history
 Becker : let the facts speak for themselves
 Marrou : positivist notion of history
 Only through a series of discoveries does the historian move from hist exp to hist kno
 potential evidence: any datum available here and now
 formal evidence : any datum discovered to be relevant to some hist quest
 actual evidence: any datum appealed to in a hist judgement
 Bultmann: early Xtians had some experience of the formation of the synoptic tradition
 B put such experiences together: evidence in synoptics: not believing synopt
 Question for hist intell
 supposes some historical knowledge
 may give rise to insight, expressed in a surmise
 surmise - Sitz im Leben - further question - surther insight - further surmise
 if just surmises - then on a false trail - shift to other data - other qq
 if not just surmise, if insight leads to further data - then formal evidence
 heuristic
 ecstatic
 constructive
 selective
 critical - pseudo-Dionysius - Russian mir moved from history of Russia to his of G H
 two senses of critical : believe testimony - shift field of relevance
 Distinguishing mark of Critical history
 process of heuristic ecstatic constructive selective critical insights
 occurs twice -- what were the authors up to - appreciate and understand them
 use them intelligently
 what does their statement establish
 critical process: set of cards with evaluation on each
 constructive of history : what do I get from the cards
 Two processes interdependent = revise opinion of author because of hist conclusions

Constructive: (1) the linking together of data through cumulative insights
 (2) the tentative narrative that expresses the insights

Reflective & Judicial: no further relevant qq; one reaches a point where formal
 notion of context: linking together of qq & aa ^{becomes actual evidence}

importance of accurate formulation of themes and topics

otherwise qq dry up before their time or else they keep coming when no longer due

Further observations on judgement

new data may be discovered: archeology OT; Qumran NT; Nag Hamadi Gnosticism

later events may change perspectives of earlier events

neither simply invalidates earlier work competently done

new data fill out the picture, do not eliminate interwoven qq & aa

later events have to pertain to same or related context

Frederick William III easier to understand than Schleiermacher

we'll always have Nero, but the same cannot be said of Luther (1932)

Critical history of the second degree

Not only does the historian come to understand the value and weaknesses of his course

But also the historical community evaluates the historian's work

heuristic ecstatic constructive selective critical judicial

reviews, discussions, classes

Began from statement that history presupposes some knowledge of history

Have come full circle: after a point it begins from critical history of second degree

Purpose

Not to solve problem of relativism, presuppositions, etc

But to indicate the set of procedures that caeteris paribus lead to sound results

Becker, Rothacker, Heussi, Bultmann p. 196