

Natural Right and Historical Mindedness

Historical Mindedness

There are three components to the notion of historical mindedness: a retrospective component that looks to the past; a constitutive component that is the shifting historicity of our being; and a prospective component that looks to the future and seeks to make it differ from the past.

On each of the three a few words should be said.

As it looks to the past, historical mindedness makes its aim the interpretative reconstruction of the constructions of the human spirit. Such constructions are social and cultural. Social constructions are the family and mores, community and education, state and law, economy and technology, churches and sects. Such constructs of social order are, in various ways, explained, justified, legitimated by such cultural constructs as religion, art, and literature, mathematics, philosophy, and science, history, human studies, and theology.

The constructions of the human spirit, then, embrace the whole of human social and cultural history. I say history and not science, not indeed to exclude science since good history is enlightened by science, but to draw attention to the leading element in my statement of concern. That statement was "the interpretative reconstruction of the constructions of the human spirit." Such reconstruction is not just an assembly of abstract principles and laws, mappings and seriations, such as a science offers. It is not such principles and laws as