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There is history 1 that is written about, and there is history 2 that is written. History 2 aims at expressing knowledge of history 1.

The precise object of historical inquiry and the precise nature of historical investigation are matters of not a little obscurity. This is not because there are no good historians. It is not because good historians have not by and large learnt what to do. It is mainly because historical knowledge is an instance of knowledge, and few people are in possession of a satisfactory cognitional theory.

A similar view has been expressed by Gerhard Ebeling. He considers it unquestionable that modern historical science is still a long way from being able to offer a theoretically unobjectionable account of the critical-historical method, and that it needs the cooperation of philosophy to reach that goal. *Word and Faith*, London: SCM, 1963, p. 49. Originally, 'Die Bedeutung der historischkritischen Methode, *Zschr. f. Theol. u. Kirche* 47 (1950) 34.

A more concrete illustration of the matter may be had by reading the Epilegomena in R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1946. The first three sections on 'Nature and History,' 'The Historical Imagination,' and 'Historical Evidence,' are all right on the point. The fourth on 'History as Re-enactment' is complicated by the problems of idealism. See ibid., Editor's Preface, pp. vii-xx.

I shall consider three topics: first, nature and history; second, historical experience and historical knowledge; and critical history. Tomorrow, we will go on to history and dialectic, the way from history into dialectic, or historians on history.

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[1] The first part of the lecture of the seventh day. The audio recording can be found at 52700A0E060

1 Nature and History

A first step will be to set forth the basic differences between history and natural science, and we shall begin from a few reflections on time.

One can think of time in connection with such questions as, what is the time, what is the date, how soon, how long ago. On that basis one arrives at the Aristotelian definition that time is the number or measure determined by the successive equal stages of a local movement. It is a number when one answers three o'clock or January 26, 1969. It is a measure when one answers three hours or 1969 years. One can push this line of thought further by asking whether there is just one time for the universe or, on the other hand, there are as many distinct times as there are distinct local movements. On the Ptolemaic system there did exist a single standard time for the universe; the outmost of the celestial spheres, the *primum mobile,* contained the material universe and was the first source of all local movement. With the acceptance of the Copernican theory, there vanished the *primum mobile*, but there remained a single standard time, a survival Newton explained by distinguishing true and apparent motion and by conceiving true motion as relative to absolute space and absolute time. With Einstein, Newton's absolute time vanished, and there emerged as many standard times as there are reference frames that are in relative motion.

Now the foregoing notion of time certainly is of great importance to the historian, for he has to date his events. It is not, however, an adequate account of what time is, for it is limited to counting, measuring, and relating to one another in a comprehensive view all possible instances of such counting and measuring. Moreover, it is this aspect of time that suggests the image of time as a raceway of indivisible instants, an image that little accords with our experience of time.

Fortunately, besides questions about time that are answered by numbers and measurements, there is a further different set concerned with 'now.' Aristotle asked whether there is a succession of 'nows' or just a single 'now.' He answered with a comparison. Just as time is the measure of the movement, so the 'now' corresponds to the body that is moving. Insofar as there is succession, there is difference in the 'now.' But underpinning such differences is the identity of the substratum.

This advertence to the identity of the substratum, to the body that is moving, removes from one's notion of time the total extrinsicism of each moment from the next. No doubt, each successive moment is different, but in the difference there is also an identity.

With this clue we may advance to our experience of time. There is succession in the flow of conscious and intentional acts; there is identity in the conscious subject of the acts; there may be either identity or succession in the object intended by the acts. So we have the acts, the subject, and the object: succession in the acts, identity in the subject, while the object may be identical or different. Analysis may reveal that what actually is visible is a succession of different profiles; but experience reveals that what is perceived is the synthesis (*Gestalt*) of the profiles into a single object. Analysis may reveal that the sounds produced are a succession of notes and chords; but experience reveals that what is heard is their synthesis into a melody. There results what is called the psychological present, which is not an instant, a mathematical point, but a time-span, so that our experience of time is, not of a raceway of instants, but a now leisurely, a now rapid succession of overlapping time-spans. The time of experience is slow and dull, when the objects of experience change slowly and in expected ways. The lecturer drones on. But time becomes a whirligig, when the objects of experience change rapidly and in novel and unexpected manners.

Whether slow and broad or rapid and short, the psychological present reaches into its past by memories and into its future by anticipations. Anticipations are not merely of the prospective objects of our fears and our desires but also the shrewd estimate of the man of experience or the rigorously calculated forecast of applied science. Again, besides the memories of each individual, there are the pooled memories of the group, their celebration in song and story, their preservation in written narratives, in coins and monuments and every other trace of the group's words and deeds left to posterity. Such is the field of historical investigation.

The peculiarity of this field resides in the nature of individual and group action. It has both a conscious and an unconscious side. Apart from neurosis and psychosis the conscious side is in control. But the conscious side consists in the flow of conscious and intentional acts that we have been speaking of since we began this course. What differentiates each of these acts from the others lies in the manifold meanings of meaning set forth in our fourth chapter. Meaning, then, is a constitutive element in the conscious flow that is the normally controlling side of human action. Common meaning is a constitutive element in human community. It is this constitutive role of meaning in the controlling side of human action that grounds the peculiarity of the historical field of investigation.

Meaning may regard the general or the universal, but most human thought and speech and action are concerned with the particular and the concrete. Again, there are structural and material invariants to meaning, but there also are changes that affect the manner in which the carriers of meaning are employed, the elements of meaning are combined, the functions of meaning are distinguished and developed, the realms of meaning are extended, the stages of meaning blossom forth, meet resistance, compromise, collapse. Finally, there are the further vicissitudes of meaning

as common meaning. For meaning is common in the measure that community exists and functions, in the measure that there is a common field of experience, common or complementary understandings, common judgments or at least an agreement to disagree, common and complementary commitments. But people can get out of touch, misunderstand one another, hold radically opposed views, commit themselves to conflicting goals. Then common meaning contracts, becomes confined to banalities, moves towards ideological warfare.

It is in this field of meaningful speech and action that the historian is engaged. It is not, of course, the historian's but the exegete's task to determine what was meant. The historian envisages a quite different object. He is not content to understand what people meant. He wants to grasp what was going forward in particular groups at particular places and times. By 'going forward' I mean to exclude the mere repetition of a routine. I mean the change that originated the routine and its dissemination. I mean process and development but, no less, decline and collapse. When things turn out unexpectedly, pious people say, 'Man proposes but God disposes.' The historian is concerned to see how God disposed the matter, not by theological speculation, not by some world-historical dialectic, but through particular human agents. In literary terms, history is concerned with the drama of life, with what results through the characters, their decisions, their actions, and not only because of them but also because of their defects, their oversights, their failures to act. In military terms, history is concerned, not just with the opposing commanders' plans of the battle, not just with the experiences of the battle had by each soldier and officer, but with the actual course of the battle as the resultant of conflicting plans now successfully and now unsuccessfully executed. In brief, where exegesis is concerned to determine what a particular person meant, history is concerned to determine

what, in most cases, contemporaries do not know. For, in most cases, contemporaries do not know what is going forward, first, because experience is individual while the data for history lie in the experiences of many, secondly, because an actual course of events results not only from what people intend but also from their oversights, mistakes, failures to act, thirdly, because history does not predict what will happen but reaches its conclusions from what has happened, and fourthly, because history is not merely a matter of gathering and testing all available evidence but also involves a number of interlocking discoveries that bring to light the significant issues and operative factors.

So the study of history differs from the study of physical, chemical, biological nature. There is a difference in their objects, for the objects of physics, chemistry, biology are not in part constituted by acts of meaning. There is similarity inasmuch as both types of study consist in an ongoing process of cumulative discoveries, that is, of original insights, or original acts of understanding, where by 'insight,' 'act of understanding' is meant a pre-propositional, pre-verbal, pre-conceptual event, in the sense that propositions, words, concepts express the content of the event and so do not precede it but follow from it.

There is, however, a difference in the expression of the respective sets of discoveries. The discoveries of physics, chemistry, biology are expressed in universal systems and are refuted if they are found to be incompatible with a relevant particular instance. But the discoveries of the historian are expressed in narratives and descriptions that regard particular persons, places, and times. They make no claim to universality; they could, of course, be relevant to the understanding of other persons, places, and times; but whether in fact they are relevant, and just how relevant they are, can be settled only by a historical investigation of the other persons, places, and

times. Finally, because they have no claim to universality, the discoveries of the historian are not verifiable in the fashion proper to the natural sciences; in history verification is parallel to the procedures by which an interpretation is judged correct.

Let us now turn to such human sciences as psychology and sociology. Two cases arise. These sciences may be modeled on the procedures of the natural sciences. Insofar as this approach is carried out rigorously, meaning in human speech and action is ignored, and the science regards only the unconscious side of the human process. Professor Skinner at Harvard: You reach a psychological explanation when a robot will do it. In this case the relations between history and human science are much the same as the relations between history and natural science. However, there is much psychology and sociology that does recognize meaning as a constitutive and normally controlling element in human action. To their study the historian leaves all that is the repetition of routine in human speech and action and all that is universal in the genesis, development, dissemination, and breakdown of routines. Moreover, the more psychology and sociology the historian knows, the more he will increase his interpretative powers. Conversely, the greater the achievements of historians, the broader will be the field of evidence on human speech and action that has been opened up for psychological and sociological investigation.

2 Historical Experience and Historical Knowledge

I conceive human knowing to be, not just experiencing, but a compound of experiencing, understanding, and judging. Hence, if there is historical knowledge, there must be historical experience, historical understanding, and historical judging. Our present aim is to say something about historical

experience and then something about the thought process from historical experience to written history.

Already there has been described the subject in time. He is identical, ever himself. But his conscious and intentional acts keep shifting in one way or another to make his 'now' slip out of the past and into the future, while the field of objects that engage his attention may change greatly or slightly, rapidly or slowly. Not only is the subject's psychological present not an instant but a time-span, but in it the subject may be reaching into the past by memories, stories, and history and into the future by anticipations, estimates, and forecasts.

Now it is sometimes said that man is a historical being. The meaning of the statement may be grasped most vividly by a thought experiment. Suppose a man suffers total amnesia. He no longer knows who he is, fails to recognize friends and relatives, does not recall his commitments or his lawful expectations, does not know where he works or how he makes his living, and has lost even the information needed to perform once customary tasks. Obviously, if he is to live, either the amnesia has to be cured, or else he must start all over. For our pasts have made us whatever we are, and on that capital we have to live or else we must begin afresh. Not only is the individual an historical entity, living off his past, but the same holds for the group. If we suppose that all members in the group suffer total amnesia, there will be as total a collapse of all group functioning as there a total collapse of individual functioning. Groups too live on their past, and their past, so to speak, lives on in them. The present functioning of the good of order is what it is mostly because of past functioning and only slightly because of the minor efforts now needed to keep things going and, when possible, to improve them. To start completely afresh would be to revert to a very distant age.

Now I am not offering a medical account of amnesia. I am simply attempting to portray the significance of the past in the present, and, thereby, to communicate what is meant by saying that man is a historical being. But being historical is the history that is written about. It may be named, if considered interiorly, an existential history, the living tradition which formed us and thereby brought us to the point where we began forming ourselves. On this rejection of the Enlightenment as the removal of the past and a new fresh start, Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, pp. 250-90. This tradition includes at least individual and group memories of the past, stories of exploits and legends about heroes, in brief, enough of history for the group to have an identity as a group and for individuals to make their several contributions towards maintaining and promoting the common good of order. But from this rudimentary history, contained in any existential group functioning, any living tradition, we must now attempt to indicate the series of steps by which one may, in thought, move towards the notion of scientific history.

In general, this process is a process of objectification. It is from the *vécu* to the *thématique*, from the *existenziell* to the *existenzial*, from *exercite* to *signate*, from the fragmentarily experienced to the methodically known. We shall begin from the simpler instances of autobiography and biography before going on to the more complex matter of history which regards groups.

Towards an autobiography, a first step is a diary. Day by day one records, not every event that occurred — one has other things to do besides writing down what one is doing — but what seems important, significant, exceptional, new. So one selects, abbreviates, sketches, alludes. One omits most of what is too familiar to be noticed, too obvious to be mentioned, too recurrent to be thought worth recording.

As the years pass and the diary swells, retrospect lengthens. What once were merely remote possibilities, now have been realized. Earlier events, thought insignificant, prove to have been quite important, while others, thought important, turn out to have been quite minor. Forgotten events have to be recalled and inserted both to supply the omitted context of the earlier period and to make later events more intelligible. Earlier judgments, finally, have to be complemented, qualified, corrected. But if all this is attempted, one has shifted from keeping a diary to writing one's memoirs. One enlarges one's sources from the diary to add to the diary all the letters and other material one can acquire. One ransacks one's memory. One asks questions, and to meet them one starts reconstructing one's past in one's imagination, depicting to oneself now this now that former *Sitz im Leben*, to find answers and then ask the further questions that arise from these answers. As in interpretation, so here too there gradually are built up contexts, limited nests of questions and answers, each bearing on some multifaceted but determinate topic. In this fashion the old, day-by-day organization of the diary becomes quite irrelevant. Much that had been overlooked now has been restored. What had been merely juxtaposed now is connected. What had been dimly felt and remembered now stands in sharp relief within perhaps unsuspected perspectives. There has emerged a new organization that distinguishes periods by broad differences in one's mode of living, in one's dominant concern, in one's tasks and problems, and in each period distinguishes contexts, that is, nests of questions and answers bearing on distinct but related topics. The periods determine the sections, the topics determine the chapters, of one's autobiography.

Biography aims at much the same goal but has to follow a different route. The autobiographer recounts what 'I saw, heard, remembered, anticipated, imagined, felt, gathered, judged, decided, did ...' In the

biography, statements shift to the third person. Instead of stating what is remembered or has been recalled, the biographer has to do research, gather evidence, reconstruct in imagination each successive *Sitz im Leben*, ask determinate concrete questions, and so build up his set of periods each containing a larger or smaller set of related contexts. In the main there are three differences between autobiography and biography. The biographer is free from the embarrassment that may trouble an autobiographer in his self-revelation. The biographer may appeal to later events that put in a new light the judgments, decisions, deeds of his subject, to reveal him to be more or less profound, wise, far-sighted, astute than one otherwise would have thought. Finally, since the biographer has to make his subject intelligible to a later generation, he has to write not just a 'life' but rather a 'life and times.'

While in biography the 'times' are subordinate clarification of the 'life,' in history this perspective is reversed. Attention is centered on the common field that, in part, is explored in each of the biographies that are or might be written. Still this common field is not just an area in which biographies might overlap. There is social and cultural process. It is not just a sum of individual words and deeds. There exists a developing and/or deteriorating unity constituted by cooperations, by institutions, by personal relations, by a functioning and/or malfunctioning good of order, by a communal realization of originating and terminal values and disvalues. Within such processes we live out our lives. About them each of us ordinarily is content to learn enough to attend to his own affairs and perform his public duties. To seek a view of the actual functioning of the whole or of a notable part over a significant period of time is the task of the historian.

As the biographer, so too the historian proceeds from the data made available by research, through imaginative reconstruction and cumulative

questioning and answering, towards related sets of limited contexts. But now the material basis is far larger in extent, far more complex, more roundabout in relevance. The center of interest has shifted from the individual to the group, from private to public life, from the course of a single life to the course of the affairs of a community. The range of relevant topics has increased enormously, and, on many, specialized knowledge may be a necessary prerequisite to undertaking historical investigation. Finally, history itself becomes a specialty; historians become a professional class; the field of historical investigation is divided and subdivided; and the results of investigations are communicated in congresses and accumulated in periodicals and books.

First, then, history and nature; secondly, historical experience – we all experience fragments of history – and on the other hand, historical knowledge, which puts together these fragments through the process of investigation. Our third topic is critical history.

3 Critical History

A first step towards understanding critical history lies in an account of pre-critical history. For pre-critical history, the community is the conspicuous community, one's own. Its vehicle is narrative, an ordered recital of events. It recounts 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 by possessing an identity, knowing itself and devoting itself to the cause, at worst, of its survival, at best, of its betterment. The function of pre-critical history is to promote such knowledge and devotion. It never is just a narrative of bald facts. It is artistic: it selects, orders, describes; it would awaken the reader's interest and sustain it; it

would persuade and convince. Again, it is ethical: it not only narrates but also apportions praise and blame. It is explanatory: it accounts for existing institutions by telling of their origins and development and by contrasting them with alternative institutions found in other lands. It is apologetic; correcting false or tendentious accounts of the people's past, and refuting the calumnies of neighboring peoples. Finally, it is prophetic: to hindsight about the past there is joined foresight on the future and there are added the recommendations of a man of wide reading and modest wisdom.

Such pre-critical history, even purged of its defects, though it might well meet very real needs in the functional specialty communications,' at least does not qualify as the functional specialty 'history.' For that specialty, while it operates on the four levels of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, still operates on the other three with a principal concern for judging, for settling matters of fact. It is not concerned with the highly important educational task of communicating to fellow citizens or fellow churchmen a proper appreciation of their heritage and a proper devotion to its preservation, development, dissemination. It is concerned to set forth what really happened or in Ranke's perpetually quoted phrase, *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Finally, unless this work is done in detachment, quite apart from political or apologetic aims, it is attempting to serve two masters and usually suffers the evangelical consequences.

Next, this work is of just a matter of find testimonies, checking them for credibility, and stringing together what has been found credible. That is what Collingwood calls the scissors-and-paste concept of history. The string of credible testimonies merely re-edits historical experience. It does not advance to historical knowledge, which grasps what was going forward, what, for the most part, contemporaries did not know. Many early Christian may have had a fragmentary experience of the manner in which the elements

in the synoptic gospels were formed; but Rudolf Bultmann was concerned to set forth the process as a whole, and while he found his evidence in the synoptic gospels, still that evidence did not presuppose belief in the truth of the evangelists' statements.

Thirdly, only a series of discoveries can advance the historian from the fragmentary experiences, that are the source of his data, to knowledge of the process as a whole. Like a detective confronted with a set of clues that at first leave him baffled, the historian has to discover in the clues, piece by piece, the evidence that will yield a convincing account of what happened. Since the evidence has to be discovered, a distinction has to be drawn between potential, formal, and actual evidence. Potential evidence is any datum, here and now perceptible. Formal evidence is such a datum insofar as it is used in asking or answering a question for historical intelligence. Actual evidence is formal evidence invoked in arriving at a historical judgment. There are data that no one would think of using as a basis for settling past historical questions. It's potential evidence. Someone comes along and sees how this datum might be relevant to solving some historical question. Think of Collingwood's discoveries with regard to Roman walls in Britain, what they were for, and so on. The data had been there for endless time. Find out the way in which these data can be used to settle some historical question, and your potential evidence is becoming formal evidence: it might work. And it becomes actual evidence when it settles the matter. In other words, data as perceptible are potential evidence; data as perceptible and proximately intelligible are formal evidence; data as perceptible, as understood, and as grounding a reasonable judgment are called actual evidence. As Collingwood said, most advance in historical knowledge is from people seeing how to move something from potential evidence to formal and actual evidence.

What starts the process is the question for historical intelligence. With regard to some defined situation in the past one wants to understand what was going forward. Clearly, any such question presupposes some historical knowledge. Without it, one would not know of the situation in question, nor would one know what was meant by 'going forward.'

History, then, grows out of history. Critical history was a leap forward from pre-critical history. Pre-critical history was a leap forward from stories and legends, which also fulfilled the group's need for an identity. Inversely, the more history one knows, the more data lie in one's purview, the more questions one can ask, and the more intelligently one can ask them.

The question for historical intelligence is put in the light of previous knowledge and with respect to some particular datum. It may or may not lead to an insight into that datum. If it does not, one moves on to a different question. If it does, the insight is expressed in a surmise, the surmise is represented imaginatively, and the image leads to a further related question. This process may or may not be recurrent. If it is not, one has come to a dead end and must try another approach. If it is recurrent, and all one attains is a series of surmises, then one is following a false trail, and once more must try another approach. But if one's surmises are coincident with further data or approximate to them, one is on the right track. The data are ceasing to be merely potential evidence; they are becoming formal evidence; one is discovering what the evidence might be.

If one is on the right track long enough, there occurs a shift in the manner of one's questioning, for more and more the further questions come from the data rather than from images based on surmises. One still has to do the questioning. One still has to be alert. But one has moved out of the assumptions and perspectives one had prior to one's investigation. One has

attained sufficient insight into the object of one's inquiry to grasp something of the assumptions and perspectives proper to that object. And this grasp makes one's approach to further data so much more congenial that the further data suggests the further questions to be put. To describe this feature of historical investigation, let us say that the cumulative process of datum, question, insight, surmise, image, formal evidence – and it can go on over years before you get very far – that that cumulative process is ecstatic. It is not the hot ecstasy of the devotee but the cool one of growing insight. It takes one out of oneself. It sets aside earlier assumptions and perspectives by bringing to light the assumptions and perspectives proper to the object under investigation.

The same process is selective, constructive, and critical. It is selective: not all data are promoted from the status of potential evidence to the status of formal evidence. It is constructive: for the selected data are related to one another through an interconnected set of questions and answers or, expressed alternatively, by a series of insights that complement one another, correct one another, and eventually coalesce into a single view of the whole. Finally, it is critical: for insights not only are direct but also inverse. By direct insight one grasps how things fit together, and one murmurs one's 'Eureka.' By inverse insight one is prompted to exclaim, How could I have been so stupid as to suppose ...? One sees that things are not going to fit and, eventually, by a direct insight one grasps that some item fits not in this context but in some other. So a text is discovered to have been interpolated or mutilated. So the pseudo-Dionysius is extradited from the first century and relocated at the end of the fifth: he quoted Proclus. So an esteemed writer comes under suspicion: the source of his information has been discovered; in whole or in part, without independent confirmation, he is

used not as evidence for what he narrates but in the roundabout fashion that rests on his narrating, his intentions, readers, methods, omissions, mistakes.

Note that the word ‘critical’ has two quite different meanings. In pre-critical history it means that one has tested the credibility of one’s authorities before believing them. In critical history it means that one has shifted data from one field of relevance to another: you shift a coin from the realm of historical evidence to the realm of the history of propaganda. You shift from evidence on what happened to evidence on what this fellow was up to with regard to what happened.