

Chapter Nine

~~8-24~~ Historians and Cognitive Theory

Historians do not need a cognitive theory either to learn or to develop their procedures or to carry them out with discrimination and finesse. But at times they are led to do more. They may feel impelled to say just what they are doing when doing history. They may be obliged to defend their own practice against encroaching error. Then, whether they wish it or not, they are making use of some more or less adequate or inadequate cognitive theory. The results are quite interesting. For however much the historian may be handicapped by a failure to master philosophic complexities, he easily is a skilful ~~writer and can convey to the discerning just what goes on in historical investigation now is the time for all good men~~ writer and can convey to the discerning -- to people that desire not to argue but to understand -- just what goes on in historical investigation.

It will not be possible in this subsection to portray the wealth and penetration of such reflections of historians. But we may hope to entice our more enlightened readers to go on to a study of the originals and, inasmuch as we ~~clear~~^{point} up some of the difficulties in cognitive theory, our outlines may provide a helpful introduction.

1.
3-41 ~~Insight and Verstehen~~ Insight and "Verstehen"

Our terms, insight, act of understanding, refer to cognitive events that occur in all human knowledge, in mathematics, in natural science, in commonsense knowledge, in philosophy, in the human sciences, and in history. In this generality, an insight is an act in which, in response

3.4 Some Further Issues

we
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3.4 Some Further Issues

The advantage of ~~any~~ an adequate cognitional theory is that it enables one to say within a brief compass narrate, within a brief compass, what is the field of historical inquiry, what the object of historical knowledge, what the activities of the critical historian. But, of course, such a cognitional theory is not needed either to discover or to develop or to practice critical history, for the mode in which historical insights accumulate and coalesce is quite similar to the mode in which commonsense understanding grows.

3.4 Some Further Issues

We have been indicating the field of historical inquiry, the object of historical knowledge, the activities of the critical historian. In doing so we have presupposed our cognitional theory, and that presupposition, quite automatically, has side-tracked a number of issues, to which historians, with some theoretical interests, have devoted not a little attention. For two reasons it would seem to be worthwhile to advert explicitly to these issues. First, because it would make our own presentation both more clear and more concrete. Secondly, because it would ~~maintain~~ put our position in the context of the reflections of professional historians and, I hope, entice our readers to a first-hand study of such reflections.

3.41 Facts and Theories

Data are one thing, facts are another. There are the data given to sense and the data given to consciousness. Their common and unfailing characteristic is that they are given or may be given. They may or may not be attended to, inquired into, understood, classified, invoked as evidence in judgement. In so far as they are, they are not merely given but also entering into combination with other cognitional components. In so far as they are not, they are given indeed but merely given.

In contrast, a fact is a known event, and human knowledge is a compound of experiencing, understanding, and judging. A fact, accordingly, has the concreteness of an object of experience; it has the precision of an object of understanding

3.4 History and Cognitive Theory

Historians do not need a cognitive theory either to discover or improve historical procedure or to carry out these procedures with discrimination and finesse. None the less, when they come to tell what precisely they are doing when doing history, when they endeavor to defend correct procedure against erroneous methodologies, then whether they like it or not they are making use of some more less adequate or inadequate cognitive theory.

to inquiry about sensible presentations or representations (including words and mathematical symbols), an intelligible unity or relationship is grasped; and thereby there is constituted the active ground whence proceed conception, definition, hypothesis.

Now, since the days of Schleiermacher German writers on hermeneutics, philology, and history have been employing the word, Verstehen. But they use it, not with the generality of our insight, but rather with a restriction to human affairs ^{an odd} and especially now is the time for all good men to come to of our insight, but rather with a restriction to an understanding of human affairs and, particularly, to an understanding that might admit but at least does not seek ~~does not admit~~ some universal and systematic expression. Verstehen, then, is understanding of what is human and, in some sense, individual.

and conception; it has the "stubbornness" of what has been grasped as (approximating to) the) virtually unconditioned and so as something (probably) independent of the knowing subject.

— See Insight on data, pp. 73 f.; on fact, pp. 331. 347, 366, 411 ff.

— Now as an investigation proceeds, insights accumulate and oversights diminish. This on-going process of change, while it does not affect data inasmuch as they may be given, does affect enormously the data that are sought out, attended to, combined now one way now another in ever larger and more complex structures. On the other hand, it is only as the structures take on a definite shape, as the process of asking further questions begins to dry up, that there commence to emerge the facts. They emerge, not before we have understood the data, but only after we have understood them thoroughly and satisfactorily. It follows that the theory, im der Zusammenhang, la synthèse, so far from being determined by the facts, is what determines what are the facts.

state of affairs
 Not only is this ~~conclusion~~ ^{set} quite paradoxical to naive realists. It proved a trap to empiricist thinkers and a recurrent problem to those with idealist leanings. The empiricist wants his facts to be objects of observation, and he wants his theory to be, not any product of subjective activity, but something ~~given~~ somehow contained in the observable facts. On the other hand, the idealist is fully aware that empiricist notions regarding facts, observations, and theories are just a tissue of fictions. He is quite ready to accept what we have to say about data, insights, and ~~oversight~~

~~oversights. But he has not succeeded in discovering~~
oversights. But he has failed to discover how such procedures
come to reveal, now just what the historian happens to think,
but what was thought, said, and done by people centuries ago.
Here two main difficulties stand in his way. He has to be
liberated from the Kantian notion that Verstand is the faculty
of judging, and learn to distinguish between direct understanding
which issues in concepts and hypotheses and, on the other~~hand~~,
reflective understanding which grasps an unconditioned and so
issues in judgements. Again, he has to distinguish two notions
of the "real": there is the naive realist and empiricist notion
that the real is the object of sensitive intuition; there is the
critical realist notion that the real is what is intended in
questions and revealed through correct answers.

J. G. Droysen (1808-84) wrote and rewrote a Grundriss
der Historik, publishing it as manuscript in 1858 and 1862,
and then editing it ~~several times~~ more formally in 1868,
1875, and ~~in~~ 1882. now is the time for all good men to come
der Historik. It was edited five times in his life time, and
Rudolf Hübner has given us a critical edition with all the variants.
Quite interestingly, Droysen's method divides into four parts:
^d
Die Heuristik; die Kritik; die Interpretation; die Darstellung.
relevant
The first is concerned with the art of uncovering the remains,
monuments, and accounts of the past

(1768-1834)
 Now since the days of Schleiermacher German writers on
~~hermeneutics~~ hermeneutics, philology, history have been employing
 the word, Verstehen. But they use it neither with the pure
 intellectuality nor with the generality of our insight. It
 is an intellectual event but it is not sharply distinguished
 from ~~an~~ ^{feeling or} accompanying intersubjectivity or empathy or congeniality.
 Again, it is restricted to an understanding of human affairs
 and, particularly, to an understanding that might perhaps
 admit but at least does not seek some universal and systematic
 expression. So Verstehen is contrasted with Erklären.

162 173 Even this limited generality ~~was~~ had been reached by
 generalization. Prior to Schleiermacher hermeneutics had
 existed in bible study and in classical philology as ~~a~~ sets
 of helpful observations ~~provided~~ provided by teachers for their pupils.
 Schleiermacher gave the subject a general scope. Hermeneutics
 became relevant to every ~~instance~~ instance in which another's
 speech or writing might be misunderstood. Therewith, understanding
 167 ^abecame something common to all cases of interpretation.

Schleiermacher directed his attention, not so much
 to the object to be understood, as to the procedures of under-
 standing itself. He distinguished between grammatical
 interpretation, which grasped the meaning of the words and,
 on the other hand, ~~the~~ psychological (technical) interpretation,
 which aimed at penetrating to the individuality of the speaker
 or writer and, indeed, not so much to the sequence of his thoughts
 as to a revelatory moment in his life, to a deed intertwined with
 174 ^{other deeds,} many ~~others,~~ ~~expressions~~ even those of a different kind.

It was the merit of J. G. Droysen (1808-1884) to have endeavored to transfer the concept of Verstehen out of the vague context of esthetic and pantheist communion

J. G. Droysen (1808 - 1884) in his Historik took the
its previous
notion of Verstehen out of the vague context of esthetic and
pantheist communion

To remove the notion of Verstehen out of this vague
esthetic and pantheist context, J. G. Droysen (1808 -1884)
bbl ~~nahm~~ in his Historik set about determining its conditions.
The first of these was expression (Ausdruck). Verstehen is
understanding expression. In expression something inward
is immediately present, and that inward something is the first
and genuine reality.
199 f.

While historical Verstehen is not fundamentally different
from grammatical interpretation, still it can be identified
neither with grammatical nor with psychological interpretation.
For the historical process is neither what is written in a book
nor what individuals will and plan. Historical process is the
movement of "moral powers," and so far is the historian from
being concerned with the secrets of individuals, that he attends
to their deeds and their ends only in the measure that they
rise to the level of the moral community

As for Broysen, so for Dilthey ^DVerstehen was the understanding of expression. Further, in the ~~expression~~ ^{expression} there is present the expressed; and it is present in a manner different from the presence of a cause in its effect. For the ^{expressed} expressed itself is present in the expression, and it is understood when the expression is understood.

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But further Dilthey found Husserl's Logical Investigations epoch-making. For the doctrine of intentionality revealed how how there could be meanings and structures that were not constituted out of elements but rather preceded and generated them. This eliminated the problem of getting historical events into a single consciousness or experience so that their intelligible linkage could be grasped by Verstehen. The problem was no longer to link up atoms of experience into some intelligible interconnection. On the contrary, consciousness is ever in possession of such interconnections, and it has its proper reality in acts of meaning interconnections.

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However, while Husserl's meanings were logical, Dilthey's were expressions of Life.

Dilthey's basic step was a transposition of Hegelian thought from idealist ~~Spirit~~ Geist to human Leben. In human living a distinction was drawn between a realm of causality (subject-matter for the natural sciences) and a realm of meaning (subject-matter of the human sciences). Normally the former is contained within the latter and subordinate to it. Thus, when a woodsman cuts down a tree with an electric power saw, the actual cutting is a matter of physics, chemistry, and biology, but this process is contained within the man's purpose, his relating means to ends, the economic and social interconnections that ground these relations, and the scientific and technological knowledge that produced the power saw

Dilthey's basic step may be conceived as a transposition
~~of Hegel's~~ Hegelian thought from idealist Geist to human
Leben. Hegel's objective spirit returns but now it is the
objectification of concrete human living. Such living is not just
a matter of ^{physics,} ~~physics,~~ chemistry, and biology. It is informed by
acts of meaning, moved by values, guided by purposes, structured
by intelligible patterns, by the interdependence of whole and
~~the~~ parts, by the ~~the~~ cumulative influence of previous on later
changes, by the distinction and intimate relationship of inward
and outward, by the endless interaction of different lives.

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218-28 has empiricist leanings; his science based on Vert Verstehen
has idealist implications. Though his position is enormously
clarified by Heidegger's deriving life's projects from Verstehen,
245 ~~by~~ and by his taking considering Verstehen as an existenzial
that already is present in living, neither the full
intellectuality and generality of insight is reached, nor are
the problems set by empiricist and idealist tendencies overcome.

3.42 Facts and Theory

Already we had occasion to mention that Gustav Droysen divided historical investigation into four parts: heuristic, criticism, interpretation, and presentation. We have now to add that he traced the origins of historical criticism to the criticism of philologists and, since the philologists were concerned with the edition of texts, he granted that their criticism aimed at ascertaining objective facts. He denied, however, that historical criticism aimed at ascertaining the objective facts, the events of history. It was limited to

3.42 Facts and Theory

In Droysen's Historik the ascertainment of facts and the determination of their intelligible interconnections are not assigned to different stages of the investigation. Criticism is limited to determining the reliability of remains, monuments, writings. Interpretation has to bring to light the realities of history in the fulness of their conditions. While philological criticism ascertained objective facts, namely, it settled what the original texts were, historical criticism does not ascertain the events of history and to suppose that it does is merely a consequent of a mistaken cognitional theory.

Hu 112 ff

However, in Ernst Bernheim's Lehrbuch der historischen Methode historical criticism is divided into outer and inner. Outer criticism is concerned to determine whether the single sources are reliable historical witnesses. Inner criticism has to settle the factuality of the events witnessed by the several sources. Once these two tasks are completed, there remains the task of the Auffassung, of determining the interconnectedness (Zusammenhang) of the events.

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As in Bernheim's Lehrbuch, so in the Introduction to the Study of History by C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos Book II deals with ^{the} analytical operations of historians and its eighth chapter is entitled "The Determination of Particular Facts," while Book III is concerned with synthetic operations that assemble the facts in groups and constructions. Once more, then, facts and ^{their} structure are determined separately.

It remains that, if Bernheim assigns to an inner criticism the determination of events, still he does not consider this determination to be independent of the way in which the historian puts the events together. On the contrary, he explicitly asserts that the determination of events and the apprehension of their connections are interdependent and inseparable and even adds that, without an objective apprehension of the interconnections, one cannot even properly ascertain the sources relevant to one's inquiry.

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In an introduction

In their Introduction to the Study of History C. V. Langlois and C. Seignobos devote a second book to analytical operations and a third book to synthetic operations. The last chapter of the second book is entitled "The Determination of Particular Facts." Book III is concerned with synthetic operations. These begin from isolated facts. "Historical construction has thus to be performed with an incoherent mass of minute facts, with detail-knowledge reduced as it were to powder." For the criticism of documents yields only isolated facts. So it is that historical construction has to be performed with an incoherent mass of minute facts, with detail-knowledge reduced as it were to powder. The constructive process itself is a matter of question and answer, of analogy, of grouping, of inference. But the authors seem more helpful on the errors to be avoided than on positive directions -- a fact confirmed by M. Langlois' own practice, for in later life he seems to have been content simply to reproduce original documents.

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It follows that a historical method that wishes, first, to settle matters of fact and, later, to assemble them in intelligible unities, ~~can~~ can only mislead historians that take it seriously.

In an essay first published in the Atlantic Monthly for October 1910, Carl Becker