

Chapter Nine

History and Dialectic

Some account has been given of the field that historians explore, of the difference between historical experience and historical knowledge, and of the procedures by which historical experiences are ~~at~~ ascertained and promoted to historical knowledge.

Chapter Nine

History and Dialectic

Our account of historical knowledge has been that it consists in an adaptation of the every-day procedures of human understanding and judgement. For this reason historians have no need of a cognitional theory either to learn or to develop their thier procedures or to carry them out with discrimination and finesse. So one is not to be surprised when one reads that Leopold von Ranke

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Historians do not need a cognitional theory either to learn or to develop their procedures or to carry them out with discrimination and finesse. Then with Leopold von Ranke ~~as~~ they will explain that ~~the~~ ^{their} practice arose by a sort of necessity, in its own way. But at times they are impelled to do more than just write history. They may feel obliged to defend their practice against encroaching error. They may be led to state in part or in whole just what they are doing when they are doing history. Then, whether they wish it or not, they are making use of some more or less adequate or inadequate cognitional theory, ~~and~~ and they run the ~~same~~ risk of being caught in some philosophic undertow that they cannot quite master.

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St 14

Normally historians do not approach the problem of the nature of historical knowledge. For historical knowledge is reached by an adaptation of the every-day procedures of human understanding. While the adaptation has to be learnt, the underlying procedures are ^{too intimate,} ~~too familiar,~~ too spontaneous, too elusive to be objectified and described. So even a great innovator, such as Leopold von Ranke, will explain that his practice arose by a sort of necessity, in its own way, and not from an attempt to imitate someone else.

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At times, however, historians are impelled to do more than just write history. They may feel obliged to defend their practice against encroaching error. They may be led to state in part or in whole just what they do when doing history. Then, whether they wish it or not, they are using some more or less adequate or inadequate cognitional theory, and they easily are involved in some philosophic undertow that they cannot quite master.

~~Such adventures can be highly instructive. They have to be approached sympathetically, for~~

Such adventures can be highly instructive. For the historian is ^{then} bringing to light ^{and lively} the nature of his craft and its problems in the concrete fashion that only a practitioner can display. One must not, of course, expect a precise vocabulary, a rounded theory, logically valid proofs. One is offered the testimony of a witness, and one's main task is not to

stress deficiencies but to listen and to try to understand.

1. Three Handbooks

Handbooks on the method of historical investigation in the latter part and composition have gone out of fashion. But ~~towards the end~~ of the nineteenth century they were common and influential. I shall select three and compare them on a single point, the relationship between single historical facts and, on the other hand, their intelligible interconnections.

Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884) ^published his Grundriss der Historik first as manuscript in 1858 and 1862 and then in full-fledged editions in ~~1868~~ 1868, 1875, 1882. Rudolf Hübner has brought together all the variations in the Grundriss and added Droysen's lectures on the encyclopedia and methodology of history in a single work that had its fourth printing in 1960. now is the time for all good men to come to In a single work -- already in its fourth printing in 1960 -- Rudolf Hübner has given a new edition of the Grundriss, in which there are compiled the variations in the successive editions, and has added an edition of Droysen's lectures on the encyclopedia and methodology of history.

stress deficiencies but to listen and to try to understand.

1. Three Handbooks.

Handbooks on the method of historical investigation and composition have gone out of fashion. But in the latter part of the nineteenth century they were common and influential. I shall select three that represent different tendencies, and shall compare them on a single but significant issue, namely, the relationship between historical facts and, on the other hand, their intelligible interconnections, their Zusammenhang.

~~Johann Gustav Droysen (1808 - 1884) had lectured~~

Johann Gustav Droysen (1808 - 1884) for twenty-five years had constantly revised his lectures on the encyclopedia and methodology of history. He also composed a Grundriss der Historik which appeared as manuscript in 1858 and 1862 and in full-fledged editions in 1868, 1875, and 1882. Both the lectures and, with their variants, the Grundriss have been published by Rudolf Hübner.

In the Grundriss Droysen divided ~~MMMMMMMM~~ the historian's task into four parts: Heuristic, Criticism, Interpretation, and Presentation. ~~Though he had studied his predecessors and his contemporaries' views on the function of criticism, and so was aware that they considered assigned to criticism now is the time~~ Presentation. Heuristic uncovered the relevant remains, monuments, accounts. Criticism evaluated their reliability. Interpretation had to bring to light the realities of history in the fulness of their conditions and the process of their emergence. Presentation, finally, made an account of the past a real influence in the present on the future.

Hu 51
St 121
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It would seem that in this 19th division Droysen was aware of his departure from views of his predecessors and his contemporaries. While he limited criticism to determining the reliability of sources, they assigned to criticism the further function of ascertaining historical facts. But their position, Droysen felt, was due to mere inertia. The model for historical criticism had been the textual criticism of the philologists. The textual critic, of course, is concerned to establish objective facts, namely, the original state of the text. But historical criticism is quite a different matter. For what is meant by an objective fact is something that can be singled out and observed in a single act. But the facts of history are not so simple. They are like battles, councils, rebellions. They are complex unities that result from manifold actions and interactions of individuals. They extend over space and time. They have to be put together by assembling a manifold of particular events into a single interpretative unity.

Hu 112 ff

It follows that for Droysen the historian did not first determine the facts and then proceed to the discovery of their intelligible connections. On the contrary, the intelligible connections are intrinsic to the facts that are, not just momentarily the objects of perceived events, but intelligible unifications of manifold perceptions.

So far [↓] from being exempt from this principle, history with its imperfect modes of acquiring information had to be subjected to it all the more rigorously. There followed the necessity of independent and mutually supporting testimonies for the determination of historical facts.

It was emphasized that the facts so determined were isolated facts. They were ^{"an} ~~an~~ incoherent mass of minute facts, with knowledge of detail reduced as it were to powder." So the analytical operations of Book II ^{had} ~~have~~ to be followed by the synthetic operations of Book III. [^] ~~They proceeded by~~ ^{Synthesis was to be} ~~achieved by~~ ^{classification, by question and answer, by analogy, by grouping, by inference, by working out general formulae.} But all of these ran the risk of various aberrations and against ^{them} ~~there~~ the authors continually sounded their warnings. In fact, M. Langlois himself in later life, instead of attempting to write history, is said to have contented himself with the reproduction of selected documents.

So far from being exempt from this principle, history with its imperfect sources of information had to be subjected to it all the more rigorously. There followed the necessity of independent and mutually supporting ~~for~~ testimonies for the determination of historical facts.

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The effect of such analysis was to take the facts out of the context ~~and~~ provided by the sources, to isolate them from one another, to reduce them as it were to powder. So analytical operations had to be followed by synthetic operations. These were described as classifying, as question and answer, as analogy, as grouping, as inference, as working out general formulae. But each of these ran the risk of numerous aberrations, against which warnings were sounded continuously. Indeed so many were the pitfalls that one cannot be surprised that M. Langlois himself in later life, instead of writing history, ~~continued~~ was content to reproduce selected documents.

M 56

With Langlois and Seignobos there emerges a clear-cut separation between the determination of ~~some~~ facts and the determination of their interconnections. It is a view that ~~arises spontaneously from any empiricist or rationalist account of human knowledge. But one has to ask whether one can observe maintain that separation and none the less succeed in writing history. now is the time for all good men to come to the aid~~ seems to have arisen from the attempt to subsume history under the precepts of natural science as conceived in nineteenth-century positivist and empiricist circles. But one has to ask whether accept such a view of history and still succeed in writing history.

gradually comes to master the area under investigation, both to know with assurance the meaning, scope, and worth of the documents, and to perceive the course of events that they once concealed and now reveal.

M 131 f

4. Verstehen

Already I have mentioned Droysen's concept of historical investigation as forschend verstehen and Aron's introduction of German historical thought into the French milieu. To this older and sounder tradition we must now revert.

It ^{had} ~~two~~ ^A two components. The basic component was the German historical school, with its charter in the rejection of Hegel's a priori construction of the meaning of history, and with its glory in the achievements of Ranke and Mommsen. Its super-structure ~~consisted in reflection on history and, generally, on interpretation~~ consisted in reflection on history, interpretation, human science. Its opposition to Hegel made it empirical. Its reflection on its own achievements prevented it from becoming empiricist.

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M 131 f

4. Verstehen

Already I have mentioned Droysen's concept of historical investigation as forschend verstehen and Aron's introduction of German historical reflection into the French milieu.

To this reflection we must now revert. It was empirical, for it was connected with the German historical school, and that school's charter lay in its rejection of Hegel's a priori construction of the meaning of history. It was not empiricist, and centrally for it adverted ~~explicitly~~ explicitly to the fact of understanding, though only gradually have the full ramifications and implications of that fact been coming to light.

For Schleiermacher a basic characteristic of understanding was had from its opposite, misunderstanding. So the function of hermeneutics was to eliminate misunderstanding and thereby promote understanding. Further, it was by understanding that one surmounted the ^{hermeneutic} ~~hermeneutic~~ circle. That circle consisted in the simple fact that an interpretation can reach the whole only through the parts yet must understand the parts in the light of the whole. Breaking that circle is beyond the reach of conceptual procedures. It can be done only by the self-correcting process ⁱⁿ which preconceptual insights accumulate to complement, qualify, correct one another. Finally, understanding can cope with the individual. ~~Babies are much alike. But they~~
~~never differ~~

with the individual. The more creative the artist, the more original the thinker, the greater the genius, the less can his work be subsumed under general principles or rules of thumb. If anything, he is the source of new rules and, while the new rules will be followed, still to follow them all in exactly the manner of the master would be ~~subsumed~~ slavishly derivative. Even lesser lights have their originality. But understanding is not limited to the understanding of general principles or rules of thumb. In the first instance it is the understanding of ~~data~~ what is given to sense or, again, of what is consciousness or represented in images, words, symbols, signs. What is so given or represented, is individual. What is grasped by understanding is the intelligibility of the individual. ~~What first is expressed in concepts and words is the understood individual. Now is the time for good men to come to the aid.~~ Generalization is either a later step or else a failure to control properly one's use of language.

The scope of understanding was gradually extended. Her Schleiermacher distinguished grammatical and psychological interpretation. Grammatical interpretation was concerned to grasp the meaning of texts. Psychological interpretation aimed at understanding persons, especially at divining the basic moment of a creative writer's inspiration. August Boeckh, a pupil of Schleiermacher's, composed a Methodologie und Enzyklopädie der philologischen Wissenschaften in which the idea of philology was formulated as the reconstruction of the constructions of the human spirit. J. G. Droysen knew Boeckh's work and considered it to stand to philology as his own Grundriss did to history.

Hu 64

Hu 62

4. Dialectic: The Problem

The horizon of any given investigator may or may not have undergone the transformation of intellectual conversion, of moral conversion, or of religious conversion. This means that there are eight possible horizons that are dialectically opposed; for no conversion may have occurred, or any one, or any two, or all three

4. Dialectic: The Problem

The problem is the existence of dialectically opposed horizons. Complementary and genetic differences of horizon can be bridged. But dialectical differences involve mutual repudiation. Each considers repudiation of the opposed position to be the one and only intelligent, reasonable, and responsible stand.

Now all investigation is conducted from within some horizon. But dialectically opposed horizons result in opposed value judgements, opposed accounts of historical movements, opposed interpretations of authors, and different findings in special research. Unless some solution is found for this problem, theology cannot can hardly claim to be an academic discipline.

Other fields know about the problem and with greater or less success evade it. Natural science decreed that it considers only the questions that can be answered through an appeal to observation or experiment. It thereby excluded philosophic questions and averted the danger threatened by a lack of intellectual conversion. Again, value judgements are not constitutive of ~~phx~~ knowledge knowledge of physics, chemistry or biology and, while value judgements are relevant to the manner in which scientists are treated and the use ~~to which their knowledge is put~~ to which their knowledge is put, a liberal climate of opinion has respected their freedom and their manifest utility guarantees their survival.

In the human sciences Max Weber introduced the distinction between social science and social policy. Policy supposed value judgements, but science was to be value-free.

A recent development of this scheme has been presented by
Gibson Winter in his

of insight lies in Euclid's failure in his Elements to formulate his thought accurately. While his conclusions are all true, none the less they do not follow rigorously from the definitions, axioms, and postulates he assigns, but depend on insights for which Euclidean thought had no concepts. did not possess appropriate conceptions.

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Secondly,

of insight is had from Euclid's failure in his Elements to formulate his insights fully. Briefly, problems are solved and theorems are established, not solely on the basis of Euclid's definitions, axioms, postulates, and previous conclusions, but on the basis of valid insights that easily occur but cannot be expressed in Euclidean language.

BL 64

of insight is had from Euclid's failure in his Elements to formulate his insights fully: there are problems and theorems, which are solved or established correctly, not however because they follow from Euclid's definitions, axioms, postulates, and conclusions, previous ~~conclusions~~, but because there are and easily occur valid insights that cannot be expressed in Euclidean language.

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Secondly, the inadequate account of human understanding combines with an inadequate account of judgement, and the double inadequacy results either in Husserl's bracketing existence or Heidegger's combination of positions and counter-positions.

Richardson
Insight388

Secondly, once anyone grasps a developed account of human understanding, there follow no less momentous developments of the account of judgement, of self-knowledge, of being, of objectivity, of method. Moreover, it is only in this manner that one can make explicit the precise nature of the position that moves beyond both empiricism

of insight is had from the modern reformulation of Euclidean geometry. Euclid's elements rests that Elements depends on insights that were not acknowledged in his definitions, axioms, or postulates and, indeed, cannot be expressed within a strictly Euclidean vocabulary.

Secondly, experience and understanding taken together yield not knowledge but only thought. To advance from thinking to knowing there have to be added a reflective grasp of the virtually unconditioned and its rational consequent, judgement. There is an insufficient awareness of this third level of cognitional activity in the authors we have been mentioning and a resultant failure to break cleanly and coherently away from both empiricism and idealism.

Thirdly, in so far as Husserl's epokhe is a rejection of the empiricist notion of reality, it is to be regarded not as provisional step but as a permanent liberation. Again, in so far as Husserl not only judges rationally but also thematizes judgement and its rationality, he is moving towards a critical ^{one eliminates} Husserl's illusory cult of necessity and unveils realism. Finally, ^{facticity} ~~the unveiling of facticity is achieved,~~ [^] not by dropping the epokhe, but by adverting to the criterion or ~~ground~~ ground of truth, namely, the virtually unconditioned, that is, a conditioned whose conditions happen to be fulfilled. ^{Heidegger's brilliant ambivalence, one} It follows that to winnow out what is good in ~~Heidegger, one~~ [^] should restore the epokhe inasmuch as it means a rejection of empiricist notions of reality.

It remains that the methodologist cannot be absolved entirely from a consideration of the conflict of methods or philosophies, especially when he is not the first in the field, and when there are widely held views that would pronounce his endeavors to be impossible.

~~It has been stated that since the publication~~

It has been stated that since "... the publication of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations there has been a growing consensus that the meaningfulness of language is essentially public and only derivatively private. Unless this were so language could not serve as a vehicle for intersubjective communication... A consequence of this position... is that the meaning of a word is not explicable by reference or reduction to private mental acts."

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biases, undergo conversions, come to understand the quite different mentalities of other times and places, and even move towards understanding one another, each in his own ma distinctive manner. If they are investigating the same area, they ask different questions. When their questions are similar, still their suppositions and implications differ. Again, i one will take for granted what the other struggles to prove. Each will devote much attention to things that people of his own background would tend to overlook or misesteem. Their paths may cross a thousand times, but they are looking in different directions and seeing different aspects of an endlessly complex and many-sided reality. So their histories differ, yet of both it can be said that it offers a selective and apo approximate account of a reality that, in its fulness, never is known completely and exactly.

Such is perspectivism. It rests on the enormous complexity of historical reality, on the ^{selectivity} ~~selection~~ that every ~~history~~ ^{practise,} historian must, ~~selection~~, and on the ~~unanalysed~~ spontaneous, unobjectified controls of commonsense development of understanding.

biases, undergo conversions, come to understand the quite different common sense of other times and places, and even move towards understanding one another, each in his own distinctive fashion. If they are investigating the same area, they will be asking different questions. If the questions ~~appear to~~ happen to be similar, they will be understood in a ~~highly~~ slightly different manner. One will take for granted what the other struggles to prove. Each will stress what people with ~~in~~ his own background would tend to overlook or mis-^{take} esteem. Their paths may cross a thousand times, but they are looking in different directions and seeing different aspects of an endlessly complex and ~~many~~ many-sided reality. So their histories differ, though their procedures were impeccable, though each was completely open and free from bias. Of each it can be said that he attained an incomplete and approximate account of a reality; that, in its fulness, never is completely and precisely known.

Such is perspectivism. It throws out the naive view that historians are objective inasmuch as all repeat the same story. That event, for the perspectivist, is most unlikely. Again, perspectivism is another way of rejecting the view that the ^{the} historian ^{should} relate all the facts and let them speak of for themselves, of deploring the scissors-and-paste view of history, of lamenting with M. Marrou the havoc wrought by positivist theories on history as science. But it adds a new moment. It reveals that history is not just the past but also the present. Historians go out of fashion only to be ~~was~~ rediscovered. Then their account of the past may well be more out of date than ever. But the account survives because of all that the author incarnated in it of his own humanity. It becomes a first-rate witness about the historian and his time.

biases, undergo conversions, come to understand the quite different mentalities of other places and times, and even move towards understanding one another, each in his own distinctive fashion. They may investigate the same area, but they ask different questions. If the questions are similar, still the defining contexts of suppositions and implications may diverge. Some may ~~take~~ take for granted what others labor to prove. Discoveries can be equivalent, but approached from different angles, expressed in different terms, to be followed by a diverging retinue of further questions. Even when results are much the same, still the ~~reported~~ reports will be written for different audiences, and each historian has to devote special attention to matters that his audience would tend to overlook or misesteem.

Such is perspectivism. It denies neither truth nor objectivity nor the determinacy of historical method. What it denies is what obviously must be denied, that history is not selective, that history attains not merely truth but the whole truth. If history attained the whole truth, then history would be one and unique, and there would be no room either for selection or for perspectivism. But the truth history attains is never more than partial; which ~~is~~ partial truth is reached depends upon the historian's selection; the selecting occurs in a development of understanding, and that development is conditioned by the historian's previous development and attainments. In the ^{historian's} previous development and attainments resides the variable. Were it not a variable, there would not be the diversity of human cultures each with its own history of change. Were it not a variable, it would be a mistake ~~to think of man not in terms of nature but in terms of historicity~~ ~~to shift away from the nature of man to the historicity of man.~~

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unfortunately, will not work.

This I find a very clear and helpful statement. I would like to clarify my own position by adding a few remarks.

First, it seems to me tautologous ^{the meaningfulness of} to claim that ordinary language is ~~primer~~ essentially public and only derivatively private. For language becomes ordinary only when it is in common use; and it is in common use only when the public using it understands what it means; hence, it is the public's understanding and use of language that is essential to its being ordinary language.

Secondly, to learn the proper use of ordinary language one obviously has to study instances of proper usage. So the Oxford English Dictionary elucidates usage by quotations.

Thirdly, ~~in~~ in his Grammar of ~~the~~ Assent John Henry Newman ^{ed} explains at length when he meant by notional apprehension and by real apprehension, by notional assent and by real assent. I think these distinctions are quite valuable but the present occasion, I feel, calls for their extension. Besides notional and real apprehension, there is merely verbal apprehension. Besides notional and real assent, there is merely verbal assent.

of what is experienced. A real apprehension of real apprehension
supposes consciousness of the ~~momentary~~ private occurrence
of the acts involved in real apprehension. Real assent^{unconditionally}
affirms the object of real apprehension. In contrast, syntax
and semantics pertain to metalanguages

he does not know everything; he does not explain everything. Did he do so, there would be room neither for perspectivism nor for selection. In other words, the error of historians about the year 1900 was, not that they conceived historical reality as fixed and unequivocally structured, but that they assumed that object attainable by finite minds. Thirdly, the historian selects: the selection is effected in an already described development of understanding of the commonsense type; ~~but the development of~~ but the development of ~~and~~ understanding effecting the selection is itself conditioned by the historian's previous development and attainments. Now this previous development of the historian and the sum of his attainments are variable. variable and the variation cannot adequately be specified. They are variable, else there would not be the diversity of human cultures and the diverse histories of each. They are variable, else we would be mistaken in thinking of man in terms of nature and more of him in terms of history. Finally, the variation cannot be specified adequately: an adequate

he does not know everything; he does not explain everything. Did he do so, there ~~is~~ would be room neither for perspectivism nor for selection. Did he do so, historical reality would be known in its real fixity and its unequivocal structures. But he does ^{not} and he cannot do so. In the third place, then,

The error, then, current among historians at the turn of the century was not, in my opinion, that they regarded the past as fixed and as unequivocally structured, but that they thought it could be known without a fulness of data, a completeness of explanation, a certitude of judgement that no historian ever dreamt of attaining.

the historian selects; the process of selecting is by identity a gradual development of understanding of the commonsense type; the precise course of the development is conditioned by the historian's previous developments and attainments, which (1) are variable and (2) are not adequately specifiable. They are variable: for man is a historical being, a being whose living is informed by meaning. Such meaning shifts as situations change and different individuals respond differently. Secondly, the previous developments and attainments are not adequately specifiable: for an adequate specification would be a fully informed, completely a complete understanding of the man, and biography, no more than history, is not total information and complete explanation.

to conceive man not in terms of nature but in terms of history.

Perspectivism, then, is another manner of rejecting the view that the historian has only to narrate all the facts and let them speak for themselves, of deploring the scissors-and-paste concept of history, of lamenting with M. Marrou the havoc wrought by positivist theories of history as "scientific." But it adds a new moment. It reveals that history can reveal not only the past but also the present. Historians go out of fashion only to be rediscovered. The rediscovery finds them more out of date than ever. But the significance of the rediscovery ~~is~~ lies, not in the past the historian wrote about, but in the historian's self-revelation. The account is now prized because in it the author has incarnated so much of his own humanity. It is a first-rate witness ~~to~~ about the historian himself and his time.

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M 296

6. Horizon

lives and from which he acquires unconsciously certain fixed convictions about the nature of man and of the world. Once such convictions are established it is easier for him to believe that any number of witnesses are self-deceived than for him to admit that the impossible has occurred.

Sm 88-90

The reader will recognize what we have called horizon. The world mediated by men meaning is something we have attentively, intelligently, reasonably, responsibly to construct. In that constructing options have to be taken and, once taken, they have to be maintained, or else we have to go back, tear down, and reconstruct. The historian is engaged in constructing for himself and for us the world of mankind. He has to do it on his own principles, and those principles can conflict with the principles on which others construct their world.

It has been thought that the analogy of the present is the principle on which the historian should construct the past. But Collingwood has pointed out that, while nature is uniform, man is not just nature but historical and, indeed, culture is not; it is subject to the greatest variations. Somewhat tartly he added that the Greeks and Romans controlled their population by exposing new-born infants, ^{that} and the fact is not cast in doubt because it lies entirely outside the experience of the contributors to the Cambridge Ancient History.

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6. Horizons

St30 Sir Lewis Namier neatly defined a historical sense as
"an intuitive understanding of how things do not happen"
375 Moreover, he placed its origin in historical study,

6. Horizons

Sir Lewis Namier thought the crowning attainment of historical study was a historical sense, and he defined the latter as "an intuitive understanding of the way things do not happen." This, of course, is quite true: the better one understands the past, the better equipped one is to understand more of it. But this truth cannot be inverted, as if it implied that

6. Horizons

Historians are entrusted with a notable part of the task of constructing the world mea mediated by meaning. Their part regards the human, the past, the particular. But they do not come empty-handed to it, or equipped only with historical training and knowledge

~~Becker was teaching us~~

What we have already narrated on Becker's views, will have prepared the reader for this open acknowledgement that historians do have preconceptions that influence their conclusions.

This open acknowledgement a that historians do have preconceptions that affect their writing of history is quite in accord, not only with what he have already recounted of Becker's opinions, but also with what he have said ^{we} early earlier on horizon and on meaning. Each of us lives in a world mediated by meaning. It is a world constructed by our conscious and intentional activities over the years. It is a world, not merely of details, but also of basic options. Once such options are taken and built upon, they have to be maintained, or else one has to b go back, tear down, and reconstruct. Such an effort is not easily undertaken, not quickly completed, is not easily undertaken; it is not comfortably done; it is not quickly completed. It can be comparable to major surgery. Now the historian is engaged in extending his world mediated by meaning and, as well, in providing us with the means of extending our own. He has to settle ^{not only} not only questions of detail but also to take a stand on larger issues. Taking such a stand~~x~~ is to reject any opposite stand. Rejecting any opposite stand implies that contrary witnesses can have a place in the historian's world only if they are self-deceived. Whether they are two or two hundred or two thousand, si is quite irrelevant.