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History

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[3 pp. First is headed 'History,' 2nd 'History as knowledge of past (object above)' and 3rd 'History as a contemporary act.' The letter 'A' is at the top of each page, in pencil. The next two items, also on history, will have 'B' and 'C' respectively.]

History

History regards the group; biography the individual.

History is knowledge of the past: in a loose sense it includes the evolution of species, the geological record, the genesis of planetary systems, etc.; properly, it is knowledge of the human past, of a past in which knowledge of a prior past was a determinant. Cf. 'time.'

*Basic history* tells who (persons, peoples) where (places, territories) when (dates, periods) did what (external acts, public life) and so enjoyed what success, suffered what reverses, exerted what influence.

It makes as specific and precise as possible the more easily recognized and acknowledged features of human activity on this planet.

It is basic in the sense that it determines the field, the material frame of reference, common to distinct, special histories.

*Special histories* regard cultures (art, language, literature, religion, institutions (family, society, morals, education, technology, economy, state, law), doctrines (theology, philosophy, mathematics, natural science, human science, history), and movements.

For historical consciousness the history of a doctrine is solidary with the doctrine: understanding a doctrine and understanding its history are interdependent, particularly understanding the history is dependent on understanding the doctrine.

By a movement is meant a cultural, institutional, doctrinal change with a resonance: the innovation starts from an individual or small group; it resonates because it effects a transition from what is felt, needed, wanted in implicit unformulated fashion; as it spreads and lasts it moves towards greater consciousness, more explicit and accurate formulation, more effective and thorough implementation; it becomes (in modern times) a successful '-ism' [*Die Wendung zur Idee*]

Movements may be spontaneous or contrived, freely accepted or imposed, autonomous or captured, successful or failures; they complement and support one

another, or are rivals, competitors, opponents, enemies, at war; they remain faithful to an original intention or improve, develop, deepen, extend it, or simplify, devaluate, distort, desert it; they are the stuff that the course of history puts to the test of historical experience.

The study of movements is the study of the history of cultures, institutions, doctrines in their genesis (present state equals integrated sum of past changes) and in their concrete realizations.

Further, cultures, institutions, doctrines are the component of meaning in history, the component from which basic history prescind; hence the study of movements is the study of *objektiver Geist*, of the component of interpretation that is not just in the mind of the historian but also in the historical process itself.

*General history* is basic history illuminated by special histories. It is the total view, or some approximation to it. It expresses the historian's information, understanding, judgment on cultural, institutional, and doctrinal movements in their concrete setting (or vice versa).

Basic, special, and general history are methodologically distinct. Basic and special ask questions of different types (Behavioural sciences, *Geisteswissenschaften*), employ different heuristic structures (commonsense notions of man, special skills, tastes, knowledge), appeal to different types of criteria, evidence (common consent easy, difficult).

General history: perhaps Toynbee indicates heuristic structures. It is the field in which special histories interact, modify one another, in which they interact with, modify basic history, and vice versa.

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History as knowledge of past (object above)

Human knowledge is a compound of experience, understanding, judgment. Much experience yields some understanding; much understanding grounds some judgment. To experience without understanding is stupidity or inquiry; to understand experience without judging is mythic consciousness or doubt.

Variables in knowledge are horizon (relative, development; absolute, conversion; *quidquid recipitur*), experience and information (world of immediacy, mediated by meaning, mediated and constituted by meaning), judgment (yes, no, probable, certain) and understanding (minimal in basic history, maximal in general history).

Crisis in method of history seems to be (a) philosophic [naive realism, idealism, relativism, classicist, empiricist, logic, critical realism] and (b) the transition from general history done by methods of basic history, i.e., special history handled by common sense, to development (differentiation and integration).

Understanding the past is not the past's understanding of itself.

The past's understanding of itself is the constitutive intelligibility of the past: it is what was understood by the actors, the participants, the onlookers; it is the commonsense understanding of each man with regard to his own actions and those in his circle(s); it was divided up and parceled out among many individuals; it was retrospective on an earlier past and anticipative of a future.

Historical understanding is the retrospective intelligibility of the past: subsequent events eliminate the anticipative component in constitutive intelligibility, select the 'really' significant features, make possible the understanding of a course of action from hindsight.

Battle: constitutive intelligibility = motives, intentions, plans, experiences, insights, reactions, decisions of participants before and during battle – retrospective intelligibility = the course of the battle, the essential line – it sees the whole (versus parts) in its significant components (hindsight).

Retrospective intelligibility is cumulative: each battle finds its significance within the campaign; the campaign within the war (adds technical, economic, social, political, cultural factors); the war in the series of wars.

Retrospective intelligibility does not cumulate always and indefinitely: one comes to a break; a basically new situation arises; a new *period* begins – new centres of preponderant influence – new factors of major importance.

Through cumulative retrospective intelligibility the historian understands the past in a way in which the past could not understand itself; he finds in the past's contemporary records (taken as a whole), an intelligibility unknown to the authors of the records.

The Historical Jesus: is it possible from the cumulating retrospective intelligibility of the New Testament to reconstruct the constitutive intelligibility of the motives, intentions, purposes, words, deeds of Jesus?

Understanding in natural science and in history:

Data: n-s [natural science] given as given; history given plus meaning, meaning at that place and time (law-court in England, US, leper colony in Congo).

N-S departs from everyday to systematically defined meanings; it formulates and checks hypotheses where terms are defined, bear deductions.

History, commonsense (a variable) meanings are many for each word, determined by context, lack precision necessary for any notable deduction. Historical sources and history books do not set up systems of defined terms, propose hypotheses, work out implications, verify them; they understand and they communicate their understanding; they can marshal arguments against another view; but their own view has the intelligibility of a sustained and documented narrative.

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History as a contemporary act

History is knowledge of the past; the historian by his lectures, articles, books tells people today about it; in so far as he tells them what they do not already know perfectly well, he modifies their view of the past, perhaps a 'traditional' view of the past, in any case some view of the past.

Human existence is a self-mediation (mutual) within a tradition: men either keep the tradition alive and relevant or they destroy it and replace it with another (single brutality [revolution] or piecemeal).

Modern history has been a sustained re-interpretation of the past: it has extended our knowledge enormously, it has made it far more accurate and detailed, it has worked out a vast collaboration for the writing of history, and it is has transformed our mentalities from a classicism to historical consciousness; it also has been busy liquidating Christianity and constructing secularist culture, education, institutions, doctrines. Modern historiography has been a part of a movement.