

# History – II

## Theories and Methods

Introduction to the Human Sciences

Lectures 2 and 3

09 and 12 Jan 2018

# Lecture Content

1. Main Theories
2. Methods and Tools
3. Marxism, *Annales*, Post-Colonialism

# Liberal, Positivist History

- Rankean History
  - Facts and not interpretation
  - Objective and Universal
- Positivism
  - Link between History and Sociology
  - History: Collect Facts and arrange them logically
  - Sociology: Discover the laws of human progress through inductive method
- Whig History
  - Story of progress
  - Liberal Constitutionalism of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe as the end
  - Teleology

# Marxism

- Materialism
  - Matter primary
  - Ideas secondary
  - Matter in motion
- Dialectics
  - Reality composed of opposites and their relation
  - Thesis -> Anti-thesis -> Synthesis
  - And upward spiral, not circular
- Labour
  - Role in development from Ape to Man
  - Embodies the synthesis of matter and idea
  - All human achievements are based on labour; including thought

# Marxism (continued)

- Dialectics in History
  - Emergence of contradictions
  - Surplus (importance of economy and production)
  - Base - superstructure
  - Class struggle
- History as the resolution of contradictions in society created by the emergence of surplus
- Slave Society -> Feudalism -> Capitalism -> Communism

# Annales History

- Total History
  - Nothing in the world is outside history
- New Sources
  - Archival
  - From other disciplines and sciences
- Quantitative History
  - Build generalisations on large amounts of data and information
- Mentalite
  - Identify the mental architecture of the past

# Annales (continued)

- No single cause
  - Not given a priori but has to be ascertained for each instance
- Role of geography
- New conception of time
- Marc Bloc, Lucien Febvre, Fernand Braudel, Jacques le Goff, Emmanuel le Roy Ladurie

# New Trajectories of History

- Questioned
  - Humanism -> Anti-Humanist position (structuralism)
  - Progress -> no inherent teleology in history (all imposed by ideology)
  - Enlightenment -> Forcing one conception of human good on others
- History as Meta-Narrative
  - Object of knowledge; Othering
  - Generalise -> Essentialise
  - “Who speaks for whom?”
- Post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism
  - Breaking Knowledge-Power grid



# “Against the Grain”

- Non-European (Indigenous) modes of knowledge
- Post-colonial history
  - Perspective of Colonised
  - Overcome European categories
- Gender history
  - critique “man” as norm
- Black history
  - critique “white” as norm
- Environmental history
  - critique anthropocentrism

# Methods - I

- Facts
  - Objective and Neutral
  - Constituted through interpretation; Subjective
- Objectivity
  - Desirable : Detrimental
  - Achievable : Impossible
- Sources
  - Primary (at the point of the event)
  - Secondary (based on primary sources)
  - Can there be such a distinction?
- Errors and Fakes
- Time and Space
  - Increasing emphasis on identifying and engaging with historical time
  - Variations in the concept of space, distance, topography and territory

# Methods - II

## QUESTIONING THE SOURCE

- When was the source (written or unwritten) produced?
- Where was it produced?
- By whom was it produced?
- From what pre-existing material was it produced?
- In what form was it produced?
- What is the evidential value of its contents?

# Two Visions of History

- THE STORY OF DECLINE

- Golden Age in the Past
- Human society is disintegrating and becoming corrupt
  - Non-scientific but aligned with the idea of entropy

- THE STORY OF PROGRESS

- Enlightenment as Destiny
  - Human progress Inevitable
- Based on science as method but contrary to idea of entropy

# Story of Decline or Progress

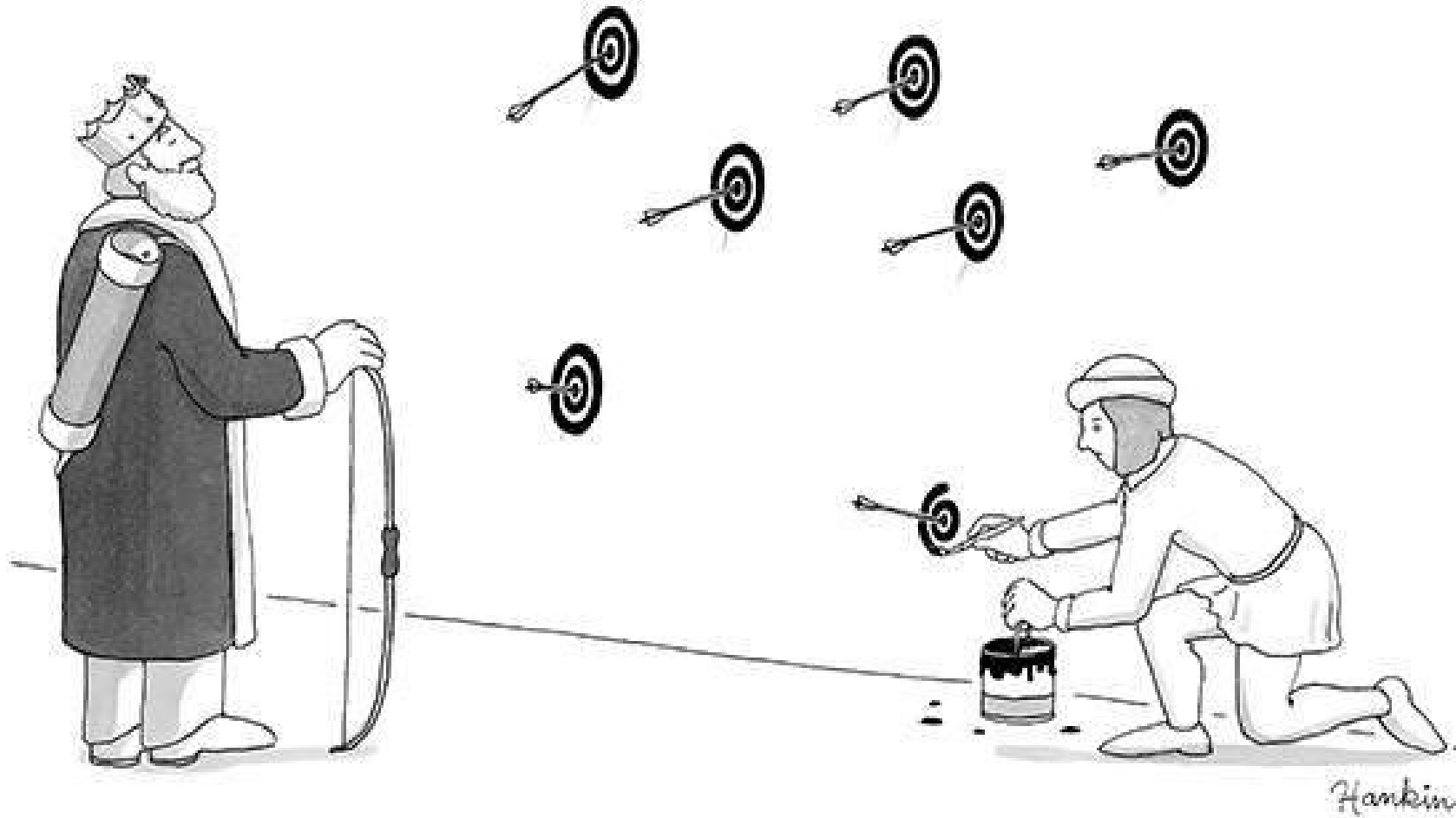


# Fake Sources



*"It doesn't mean a thing, but boy, will it drive them  
crazy a thousand years from now!"*

# Deliberate Errors



# Knowledge - Power





# The Tragedy of the Historians



"Those who don't study history are doomed to repeat it.  
Yet those who *do* study history are doomed to stand by  
helplessly while everyone else repeats it."