

History – I

Development of the Discipline

Introduction to the Human Sciences

Lecture 2

05 Jan 2018

Lecture Content

1. Origin of the Discipline
2. Meaning of History
3. Framing Questions of the Discipline

Origin - I

- Archaic Society
 - Memory
 - Sense of Past
- Oral Traditions
 - Methods of transmission
 - Aids to memory
 - Structure
- Epics and Ballads
- Myth – Legend – Folklore

Origin - II

GREECE

- *Historia* : Inquiry, Finding out
- Herodotus
 - Wrote on the history of the wars between Greece and Persia
 - Collect evidence, ask witnesses, systematic narrative of events
- Thucydides
 - History of the Peloponnesian Wars (between Athens and Sparta)
 - Evaluate evidence, neutral position, cause and effect
 - Realism : Evaluate behaviour and outcomes by emotions and self-interest

Origin - III

INDIA

- Itihasa
- Shruti : Oral traditions; Authoritative but Authorless
- Smriti : Written; Author known but text derivative, inexact
 - **Mahabharata, Ramayana, Puranas, Dharmashastras, literature**
- Massive cosmological cycles; no distinction b/w human and divine
- Revealed not investigated

Origin - IV

INDIA

- Buddhist Tradition
 - Original state
 - Process of decay : Desire (food and clothes); attachment (property); family; government
 - King elected to maintain order; pay taxes for this
 - Cosmological but republican influences (elements of modern theories of history and politics)

TRADITIONS OF HISTORY WRITING DIED OUT IN INDIA AND MERGED INTO
MYTHOLOGY

TWO HISTORICAL TRADITIONS REMAINED: FAMILY GENEALOGIES AND
COURT CHRONICLES

Origin - V

IBN-E-KHALDUN

- *Kitab al-Ibar*
 - History of the world
 - Muqadimmah (Introduction)
- Principles to evaluate evidence
- Categorised errors and mistakes in historical investigations
 - Partisanship, beliefs, lack of context, lack of knowledge
- New Science

Origin - VI

MODERN HISTORIANS

- Edward Gibbon (1737 – 1794)
 - *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (b/w 1776-88; 6 vols)
 - Primary v/s Secondary sources
 - Church and Christianity secularised
 - Search for objectivity; but also a lesson from history
 - Massive backlash
- Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776 – 1831)
 - *Roman History* (early history of Roman empire)
 - Established History as a modern discipline in universities
 - Brought together scattered ideas and methods into a single methodology
 - Mentored the first generation of academic historians

Origin - VII

MODERN HISTORIANS

- Leopold von Ranke (1795 – 1886)
 - *Primary* sources; publish them; search for primary sources
 - Interrogate the source; how, where, who: credibility
 - Facts, and only Facts
 - Understand past on its own terms
 - Universal History based on facts
 - History of the Catholic Popes: “tranquil, objective treatment”
“without rancour, without enthusiasm”
 - Method of teaching history; secular periodisation; journals and publications

Definition

- God's Story
 - Account of the action of divine will on earth
- Man's Story
 - Account of human agency; human actions
- Need to find causes and their effects
- Theory of change

“History is preoccupied with fundamental processes of change.”

~ E. H. Carr, *What is History*

A CONTINUOUS, SYSTEMATIC NARRATIVE OF SIGNIFICANT PAST EVENTS

Framing Questions

- What happened
 - When did it happen
 - How did it happen
 - Where did it happen
 - Who was involved
 - Why did happen
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- Evidence which can be crossed checked
 - Methods which can be scrutinised
 - Universal standards of verifiability and falsifiability