**BENEDICTO CROCES VIEW ON PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY**

**Abstract**

*Benedictocroce was a dominant figure in twentieth century historical and literary criticism as well as a philosopher. But his reputation as a philosopher did not last, either in Italy or in the English speaking world. Croce’s way of presentation in his works seems, not to put too fine a point on it, dismissively dogmatic, it is full of the youthful conviction and fury that seldom wears well. However, the early works of Benedetto Croce along with his long running editorship of the journal La Critica, soared him to high fame and admiration. Yet, Croce’s signal contribution to aesthetics that art is expression can be more or less is detached from the surrounding philosophy and polemics*

**Keywords;** Philosophy, History, Views, Philosophy of History

**INTRODUCTION**

The credit for laying the foundation of the modern philosophy of history really goes to the Italian philosopher, Benedetto Croce. He was an Italian idealist philosopher, a critic, historian, and politician, who wrote on various topics, including philosophy, history, historiography, and aesthetics. In most regards, Croce was a liberal, although he opposed laissez-faire free trade and had considerable influence on other Italian intellectuals, including both Marxist Antonio Gramsci and fascist Giovanni Gentile.[[1]](#footnote-2) Benedetto Croce was born on 25 February 1866 A.D. at Pescasseroli, Aquila, in Naples of an Abruzzese family. Pasquale Croce, the father of Croce, was a Neapolitan member of a wealthy family of the Abruzzo. His mother Luisa Sipari belonged to the most important family of Pescasseroli(L’Aquila). His family was influential and wealthy, and he was raised in a very strict Catholic environment.[[2]](#footnote-3) Around the age of sixteen, he quit Catholicism and developed a personal philosophy of spiritual life, in which religion cannot be anything but a historical institution where the creative strength of mankind can be expressed. He kept this philosophy for the rest of his life.

He was educated at a Catholic school. Having lost both his parents in an earthquake he moved to Rome, in 1883 where he entered the university but did not pursue his studies seriously. He studied law, but never graduated, at the University of Naples, while reading extensively on historical materialism. He involved himself in research in local history and antiquities. His ideas were publicised at the University of Rome towards the end of the 1890s by Professor Antonio Labriola.[[3]](#footnote-4) Croce was well acquainted with and sympathetic to the developments in European socialist philosophy exemplified Friedrich Engels.

History may defined as the study of man through the evidence of his past action.[[4]](#footnote-5) This is to say the activities of man as he interact with his environment in the process of production of material life leading to change. E.H Carr[[5]](#footnote-6) described this process as an unending dialogue between man and man and his environment. The philosophy of history as historiography as the end product. Philosophy of history is the view on how different philosophers described history to be.

**CROCE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY**

**All History are contemporary History;**

According to Benedetto Croce, all history is contemporary history, by which he means that all critical study of the past is informed by the problems and needs of the writer’s own time, the more conscious historians are of their contemporary motives, the more searching and accurate their investigations of the past and the more useful their reconstructions. History consists basically in seeing the past through the eyes of the present and in the light of its problems. The main task of the historian is not to record the events but to evaluate the events.

Benedicto croce prescribed a detailed philosophy of history which he highlighted as the aesthetic or art, Logic or reason and Economic or ethics. These he used them to explain the philosophical aspect of history.

**Art or Aesthetic**

Art is not merely a medium to impart delight and pleasure. Art is highly individualistic. The artist sees and represents the individuality. It is thus not an activity of the emotions but a cognitive activity. It is knowledge of the individual would present a piece of art which would not only be highly individualistic, but also a true representation of nature that a single piece would speak. Though, there is a minor difference between art and history. Art sometimes depicts not only what is real but also what is possible, but history has to conform only to reality and the actuality. Again art is intuitive but history is rational and the realism of history differs from the imagination of art. Yet, the main idea of Croce is to prove the point that history is not science, because there cannot be any science of the individual who is as unique as art.15 Art involves intuitive knowledge of the individual, and concrete knowledge, through the imagination. The activities of art are universal, rather than the specialised or unusual activity of a few. That is, art is an activity of mind which occurs whenever there is expression or language, and which has its origin in our emotions. The intellect, on the other hand, involves knowledge of universals and relations, and it produces concepts. For Croce, historiography brings together art and philosophy, intuition and concept, because historiography illuminates concepts through individual facts. By illuminating concepts in this way, narratives about history may clarify and help to resolve philosophical problems. Philosophy, in turn, enables us to interpret and narrate history.

**Logic or Reason**

The next one is logic or reason which is so essential for the writing history. Logic is the theory of thought and only thought can make the distinction between truth and false. Human behaviour requires logical or abstract philosophy sometimes to analysis its operation, which in every case is not individualistic but comes under general facts which can be reduced to fairly universal principles. Customs, manners, wars, rise and growth of the empires, cultures etc are common phenomena of history whose regularity, causes and consequences could be determined by framing general laws through logic. In additional terms, history is an art dealing with isolatedevents and individuals, and also the philosophy which offers us a universal system when it deals with general facts. Art is that which is created. Logic is that which is understood. Art requires making, logic requires knowing. Both making and knowing together constitutes history.

**Economics and Ethic**

Economics and Ethics are also vital for history as art and logic. Economics is the material cause, and Ethics lends moral support. The ethics of a society determines its level of culture. Food, shelter, clothing, land, labour, resources and all the belongings of the economic world would be required to make history. Similarly, ethics would be required as the final cause or the moral support without which whole manor of historical edifice will subside. It is the moral law that asserts itself sooner or later. Thus, from the above analysis, Croce makes philosophy as a constituent part of history while other thinkers had made history a minor aspect of philosophy. His analysis opens with an importance on art which embodies the spirit of history.

**Conclusion**

Benedetto Croce is regarded as the most valiant campaigner of history. He liberated history from philosophy and makes philosophy a constituent part of history. To him, all history is contemporary history. History consists essentially in seeing the past through the eyes of the present and in the light of its problems. That is to say, while the historian thinks of the past that past event is contemporary with the act of thinking. He defines philosophy is the methodology of history and history is the precondition of science. Finally, he has improved the method of historical study in the real sense of the term. No one can deny the deep impact of his thought on the modern world, others had subordinated history to philosophy, and he subordinated philosophy to history. Others had made events and personalities as the subject matter of history, he made ideas, concepts and thought as the subject matter of history. He distinguished history from that of science and advocated that history resembles art rather than science. The artist and the historian perceived the unique and the particular.

1. Sheikh B. Ali, “*History: its theory and method*”, (Macmillan India Ltd. 1981), PP-68-98 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. E.H. Carr. “*What is History*”, Penguin Books, 1967, PP-100-102 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. . ChakravartiA, “*History, Historical Thought and Historiography*”, Pearson, 2012, PP-76-89 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Tarikh “Historical methodology” vol.6 No. 1,(Longman,London),19, p,12. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. E.H.Carr “what is History” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)