

The Philosophy of History

with specific reference to whether we can and should re-write history, and if so, for what purpose and to what effect.

Some Ideas about History Done Right

- No history can be comprehensive, no description complete.
- Diverse perspectives are valuable.
- The problems of the present will influence what aspects of the past are of interest and what perspectives seem valuable.
- A new perspective is not a re-writing of history, it is an augmentation.
- Nevertheless, historical scholarship may cast doubt on some past analyses making some “re-writing” desirable.
- All the above assumes an honest and competent search for objective truth.

Some fears about History as Propaganda

- Postmodernism casts doubt on all (historical) “narratives”:
 - doubting objective truth, comprehensive rather than selective scepticism
 - viewing all narratives as “socially constructed” and serving a power structure
 - regarding language as meaningless
- Deconstruction leads to “Reconstruction”
 - Redefine all terms to suit the chosen narrative
 - The narrative is not intended to reflect “the truth” (which does not exist), but to serve some political agenda
 - “Critical social justice” is such a reconstruction - to what end?
 - See: Pluckrose on “The Evolution of Postmodern Thought” for a narrative about that narrative

Which Way Forward?

- Abandon the illusion of objective meaning and truth?
- Recognise the value of:
 - clear meaning
 - objective truth
 - explicit values and aims
 - evidence based histories and interventions
- Scrutinise the offerings
 - check for all the above and try to raise the bar