

ИСТОРИЯ И ТЕОРИЯ

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TELLING HISTORIES OR ACCOUNTING FOR ASPECTS OF THE PAST: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CHOICE IN A EUROPEAN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The article departs from the difference between two types of historical writings, one narrating stories about actors and the other trying to bring about evidence that justify claims to know certain things about specific aspects of the past. From the Iliad and the Odyssey, telling stories have been a common way of presenting past events. Inscriptions and annals, as well as graves and monuments, urged to present posterity with evidence for acts and occurrences.

Storytelling was always more popular than searching for evidence. In the 19th century, historians began to systematise their doubts about the truth of many stories. This source criticism has been refuted by many “historical theorists” in the late 20th and the early 21st centuries with the argument that claims that it is impossible to bring truth about the past and that all history is to be regarded as a kind of literature with, at best, symbolic “truth”. I want to reject this standpoint as based only on an internal “theory of history”-discourse and ask for analyses of actual historical research, which claims to produce new historical knowledge.

Keywords: narration, telling, evidence, inference, theory of history, philosophy of history, historiography, representation, construction, memory, source criticism, postmodernism

Introduction

Historiography as an object of research and reflection has recently become very common. In one day, I have met ambitious efforts to show the wide variations of historiographic themes concerning the subject matter and, on the other hand, different approaches to narration of the past in methods and “critical” approaches. However, the differences measured in such approaches seem to me to be an arbitrary sorting. In this article, I want to highlight one difference between two types of writing history in order to show their different roots in the past and their different consequences.

Why do I set storytelling versus giving accounts? They are certainly distinct from each other in several respects.

Storytelling, and likewise *historytelling*, takes its starting point in the actions of individuals. Memories of heroes and their achievements are contrasted to evil men/women

and their outrages. It is important to note that individual men and women are the centre of interest because of the moral side of their acts. Few stories focus on social conditions, even though some stories make an origin in social misery a distinction of certain heroes – Cinderella provides an example.

Living memories exist only with the persons who have made the experience told in remembering, and even for those who tell what they recall of an event or a series of events what they tell as remembrance is hardly possible to distinguish from a more or less standardised narrative. Yet, “memories” may last longer by being written down and made to literature and historiography as far as they include declarations of truth and accurately place the events in space and time. The Iliad (rather than the Odyssey), on the one hand, and some of the Icelandic sagas, on the other hand, may exemplify the lasting narratives of past events that have fascinated the audience for generations, and where archaeology has been able to verify at least a framework for the related events.

To write accounts of certain aspects of the past is another form of historiography. Such accounts have a theme from past occurrences and aim to show something about what took place in the past. Everything we know about humankind before the invention of writing is devoid of individuals and their actions. Archaeologists are used to drawing such non-personal conclusions. Many archaeologists have nothing but objects that they have dug out from the ground as their sources for the history they want to construe. In some countries, writing was early and we find many of the earliest “documents” in ancient monuments commemorating important victories and other events, both in pictures and in accompanying texts. In other countries, early storytelling may complement, or perhaps rather compete, with archaeological findings, for instance the Iliad and Asia Minor. The easy way is to use the stories as a key to understanding the findings. Then the account-maker is caught in the net of heroes, i.e., in the individualising perspective. In countries with no ancient histories of male or female heroes, ancient history is in all details a construction out of the findings that archaeologists have brought forward, and such findings are exempt from individuals and singular events connected with the actions of specific persons.

With so different roots, why should the storytelling of history compete with the making of accounts? To answer this question, we must move closer to our times and consider the rise of increasingly refined forms for bringing forward “evidence” for accounts of aspects of the past. This has met two sorts of opposition. First, opponents have argued that it is impossible to find truth about history, whatever aspects you deal with. This is an epistemological objection, which is strongly supported by Frank Ankersmit¹ and shared by many so-called postmodernists [1, 2]. The second opposition against accounts challenges their form and claims that history is (always) a form of literature, which makes it an object of literary criticism rather than a sort of scholarship with truth as its ultimate aim. Hayden White (deceased in 2018) has been the standard-bearer for this type of opposition. He has later added an ethical agenda to historiography. Many others share his views in part or completely. In the recent theory of history, many theoreticians have professed questions of ethics and judgments of past

¹ Ankersmit F. Introduction: History and truth. *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 2013, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 257–265. doi: 10.1163/18722636-12341253; the argument there is essentially the same as in his dissertation: Ankersmit F.R. Narrative logic. A semantic analysis of the historian’s language. *Doct. Philos. Diss.* Univ. of Groningen, 1981. 241 p.

events and actions the prime interest of historical studies and tend to brush aside questions of evidence, truth, and knowledge [3, 4]².

Thus, the following sections of this article will consider the above-outlined difference. Section 2 sorts out different forms of telling history during the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Here I also comment upon the origin of the idea that those writing history should provide evidence for what they said about the past. Section 3 examines the relation of historical evidence to the growth of science during the 17th and 18th centuries. Section 4 presents the origins of a historical world-view in the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as its relation to history based on evidence for actual events and social conditions in the past. Section 5 will finally discuss what the two different standpoints lead to concerning the present-day historiography.

Modes of history-telling during the Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the 16th and 17th centuries

The Iliad and the Odyssey are two of the most universally known examples of telling history that exist. For many centuries, readers and listeners received them as the stories about a distant past without referring to specific places and events in the actual world, but soon some learned people made a distinction between the collective chain of events for princes and peoples in the Iliad and the individually based adventures in the Odyssey. These stories were told in the same manner as the Old Norse sagas were told, i.e., as pieces of a tradition of how life was “in old times”, although the Iliad and the Odyssey were referring to a much earlier time.

History might then be “histories” with an unclear borderline between just stories and something that referred directly to the past. The mode of telling histories as entertainment does not exclude education. Just as many films today have didactic purposes, beside their most evident aim to entertain, thus narrative history may combine the one with the other. Education in this form may include moral rules for how to treat other people, as well as for collective morality of what is the best sort of government in a state or society.

In fact, most historians during the Antiquity had a moral purpose. Giving an account of the Spartans’ heroic defence against the Persian invasion into Greece was not only or even in the first hand a historical account of the Greek past but above all a guide for the future demands for sacrifices necessary to preserve the Greek culture. Therefore, recent studies of the historiography of the Greek, including the works by Herodotus and Thucydides but not only these authors, underline the importance of comparing Greek historiography with Greek poetry and drama. When the big tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, found themes in the Athenian struggle against the Persians and other maritime powers in the Aegean and beyond, they took up Homeric phrases from the Iliad and the Odyssey, as stressed by Deborah Boedeker [5]³.

The close bond between historical writing and fiction literature continued in the European culture all through the Antiquity, and the mix was rather regarded as (a kind of)

² On Hayden White’s role as a front-figure, see two articles by Herman Paul: Paul H. Hayden White: The making of a philosopher of history. *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 2011, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 131–145. doi: 10.1163/187226311X555491; further, see Paul H. A loosely knit network: Philosophy of history after Hayden White. *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 2019, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 3–20. doi: 10.1163/18722636-12341413.

³ Boedeker D. Early Greek poetry as/and history. In: Feldherr A., Hardy G. (Eds.) *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*. Vol. 1: Beginnings to AD 600. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 2011, pp. 122–147.

history than as fiction. The Aeneid is a good example, while Titus Livius's history of Rome from its foundation is closer to the heroic tradition of Herodotus and Thucydides. Plutarch (and others) transposed the moral message of "history" in this broad sense to the individual level by comparisons between the rulers. Even if many authors within these different traditions of historical writing discussed the accuracy of the facts that they wanted readers to memorise, the aspect of the past was always secondary to the moral (and aesthetic) value.

During the Antiquity, inscriptions developed as another genre of historical works, where the accurate dates of certain events were fundamentally important even though they did not formulate a history. In this sense, the annals of the Early Middle Ages were not an invention. In a very clarifying overview [6], Sarah Foote has stressed the diversity of types of annals written in different places and the old Frankish annalists' ambition to register what they perceived as parts of a divine schema⁴. Thus, God's plans with humankind form an early narrative element in some annals, whereas other annalists refer more or less openly to other superior themes.

The annals were always closely bound to an institution such as, a monastery or a city administration, and were often the work of several annalists. They normally registered only occurrences that had some relevance for the institution of origin. Secular annals were rare compared to ecclesiastical varieties. Historians of the 19th century and later have often used and praised annals, because of the limitation of narration, which some historians saw as a concentration on "facts", something which later research has shown to be an exaggeration. Sometimes annalists have tried to find a hidden moral or political agenda in the selection of dates and occurrences for commemoration that annals list. Scantiness is then not the same as truthfulness, as it may imply a story.

Historiography of the telling type emerged again in the European Middle Ages as a sort of entertaining literature in the form of chronicles. Again using S. Foote's authority [6], I must stress the gradual transition from one genre to another. It will seem that she further implies that many works known as chronicles are basically annals, even though some entries tell a story, which does not fit within the one-year frame of the true annalistic entry⁵. The entertainment was in most cases closely united with a political aim, sometimes overt and other times only open for those who could read between the lines.

Most chronicles were learned men's products, which in this case most often means men in church service, Roman Catholic or Orthodox. The printing press made historical chronicles a common object of publication in the late 15th century, spreading from Northern Italy and the Rhine Valley. By the end of the century, Paris had become the centre of the printing industry. Chronicles by several authors, both lay and ecclesiastical, were available in printing then, even if their origins were earlier [7]⁶. In the 15th century and onwards, worldly lords more often engaged chroniclers to propagate the rightfulness of the reign and the virtues of the ruler. History, or rather selected aspects of the past, were an instrument to convey the intended light of events

⁴ Foote S. Annals and chronicles in Western Europe. In: Foot S., Robinson Ch.F. (Eds.) *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*. Vol. 2: 400–1400. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 2012, pp. 346–367.

⁵ Foote S. Annals and chronicles in Western Europe. In: Foot S., Robinson Ch.F. (Eds.) *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*. Vol. 2: 400–1400. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 2012, pp. 356–358.

⁶ See especially Grell Ch. History and historians in France, from the Great Italian Wars to the death of Louis XIV. In: Rabasa J., Sato M., Tortarolo E., Woolf D. (Eds.) *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*. Vol. 3: 1400–1800. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 2012, pp. 384–405, esp. pp. 385–386.

and conditions that justified the contemporary government. Authors of chronicles often used selected written material from the past, documents and annals, and their histories do not pretend to be the product of the author's own observations or of the eyewitnesses whose narrations they have heard. In this respect, medieval chronicles are more "modern" than the histories of the Antiquity.

The 16th and 17th centuries brought no fundamental changes to the European ways of conceiving and writing history. The grip of rulers of states became tighter on the learned men who tried to give a personal touch to their works, and the number of historians who served a term in prison or lost their lives because of their inopportune ideas steadily increased.

Influences of scientific thought and enlightened moral on European historiography during the 18th and 19th centuries

Of course, historians of the Middle Ages and the following centuries knew that the world was larger than Europe. In principle, they were aware of this, but the knowledge got very little consequences for their world view. Christendom was still a premise for European historians, and the split into the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches meant no change in this respect, quite as the Reformation, which dominated in different forms in large parts of Northern Europe, used the Bible and earlier theological thinking to make the framework of historical understanding of the past of humankind.

Overall, the churches in Europe succeeded in stifling the different solitary efforts to bring in wider perspectives through the scientific revolution that began in the late 16th century. Thus, the effects of new thoughts were limited to very few individuals, who were often persecuted until a couple of decades into the 18th century, when a change took place in the relation between the church and society. The so-called Enlightenment was, however, also an elite affair, but this elite comprised the learned men and women. Women in the learned *élite* made themselves heard and observed in spite of the official gender seclusion of educational institutions. Just because of their different and often more informal education, women tended to think a bit differently from men, as is obvious in several specific cases. Such cases are, for instance, Madame de Sévigné (1626–1696) [8] in her letters, which were published in the 18th century (though they were written in the 17th century), Madame de Staël (1766–1817) [9] in her treatises and novels from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) [10] also in her novels and treatises from the late 18th century, and others⁷. All of them questioned the traditional world view of men in general, which was also the one of the church and of the state, wherever they lived. These ideas made them look at history in a way other than their contemporary male colleagues, thereby focusing their telling on other occurrences.

For both men and women holds that thinking in new paths led to asking for evidence for the traditional conceptions in daily life, in science, and, ultimately, also in history. Evidence meant reasons other than tradition or the Bible. Natural sciences

⁷ There are good articles on the three of them in Wikipedia (Engl. ed.), latest accessed 12 June 2021. All three have been the objects of biographies and monographic studies of their work and influence, especially during the late 20th and the 21st centuries, as they maintained varieties of feminist ideas.

progressed rapidly, and scientists made many new observations through experiments, leading to arguments in terms of evidence.

In historical writing, the use of evidence was not equally obvious. Historians collected much new material and the most renowned among them made use of such materials for their works. Sometimes their works consisted almost exclusively of a transfer of such material to a coherent text without own comments. In these cases, the evidence was abundant, but the author or editor did not direct its use by posing explicit problems. On the other hand, there were celebrated historians who brought up new themes and won wide readership. Such authors are Edward Gibbon with his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) and Jean-Marie Arouet de Voltaire with the histories of Charles XII of Sweden (1731) and the age of Louis XIV of France (1751). None of them taught at a university, but both played a great role in the intellectual life of their countries, Voltaire in the European civilisation at large. These authors wanted not only to tell the history of a great change, a person, or a period of time, but also to make readers learn from the history told and to infer moral lessons from the past.

On the verge of the 19th century, Friedrich Rühs, a German professor, wrote an introduction to historical studies [11], where he made a clear difference between the philosophical discourse of the history of humankind and the empirically based description of the same⁸. The historian must base his statements on evidence and must critically evaluate the sources for each statement. F. Rühs also underlines that historians should study history for its own sake, not to draw political or moral lessons from it.

So, F. Rühs advocated accounts built on critically scrutinised evidence. E. Gibbon was less of a methodologist, but he opened a discussion on a change on the macro level, which had been rare or non-existent before. In these respects, both were early swallows foreboding coming discussions.

History becomes modish and fails to live up to expectations, the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries

Studying Leopold von Ranke's voluminous presentations of the history of different countries, the reader can hardly avoid noticing that the account of politics follows the pattern recommended by F. Rühs somewhat earlier. As is well documented by German historians, this was hardly a new invention by F. Rühs, for, among others, Johann Christoph Gatterer and Johann Martin Chladenius had proposed the same [12]⁹. Arguing for a method is, however, something different from making use of it. L. von Ranke was a prolific author of monographies about different countries and finally also a world history in many big volumes. All his works are not only following specific methods, but he also conceived them according to his theory of history. In his view, every social phenomenon and especially states were full of history, and the task of the researcher was to uncover the embedded history in state institutions and state systems [13]¹⁰.

⁸ Rühs F. *Entwurf einer Propädeutik des historischen Studiums*. Berlin, Realschulbuchhandlung, 1811. 274 S.

⁹ On these, see Blanke H.W. *Historiographieggeschichte als Historik*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1991. 809 S.

¹⁰ See Torstendahl R. *The Rise and Propagation of Historical Professionalism*. New York, Abingdon, UK, Routledge, 2015, pp. 46-48.

I have argued that L. von Ranke was the first professional historian, because he formed a community of historians who embraced the same methods and theories. These historians were not just German, but the ideas rapidly got a foothold in the universities of many European countries and the USA, and professors from different countries testified L. von Ranke's importance. This does not mean that they always followed in his tracks, but they wanted to belong to the only international school of professional historians.

Thus, it would seem that history as giving account of an aspect of history had won a victory. This was not exactly the case. Starting out from politics and the need of reforming society, Karl Marx launched another view of history. History demonstrated that power had been in the hands of a few, first in feudal societies and later in capitalist societies (the "Asian mode of production" was never a cornerstone in K. Marx's own theory, though some Marxists later made it an important part of their strategy) The entire social analysis that K. Marx developed in his main works on social theory, *Grundrisse* (1857) [14] and *Das Kapital* (1867–1883) [15], aims at giving ground for a political strategy in the contemporary society.

K. Marx's adherents hailed him as the first scientific historian and the originator of a socialist insight into the problems of the world. It is true that K. Marx was an original thinker and that he worked with historical material, but his main works are rather dissertations in economy and sociology, as we understand these disciplines today¹¹. K. Marx's world-view was global, at least in principle. His most substantial works emanate from and build on the European experiences, but the individual relations between workers and owners of capital have little specifically European in them.

K. Marx was not alone in making history a source for reflections on the key forces of social development. In contrast to many others, for instance Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, he devoted much time to investigation of actual circumstances, because he wanted to give evidence for social conditions and especially for the change in the division of labour and its consequences. K. Marx's ambition was to give evidence for the past developments in a way related to what the Rankean (and other) historians did. However, his ambition was fundamentally unlike theirs, because he wanted to create an agenda for change, while one of L. von Ranke's principles was to investigate the past for its own sake. Nevertheless, it was still possible to take an intermediate position in these matters, and that is exactly what a couple of world famous researchers, Oswald Spengler [16] and Arnold J. Toynbee [17], did in the first half of the 20th century¹². I will not go into O. Spengler's argument here, as he far less than A.J. Toynbee went into detailed evidence for his thesis. While O. Spengler used biological metaphors to make his conception of flowering and waning of cultures part of an everyday understanding, A.J. Toynbee wanted to underpin his analysis with evidence in a scholarly manner. Both made, however, grandiose efforts to vindicate their macro-historical narratives of civilizational development. From the psychology that was front-line jargon when he started his multi-volume work, A.J. Toynbee incorporated a couple of concepts, challenge, and response. He transferred these concepts

¹¹ Only in his work on *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoléon* K. Marx tried a strict historical analysis. Of course, it is following the same political argument as *The Communist Manifesto*, but its basis is an analysis of a series of events in the very recent past, when he wrote it.

¹² Spengler O. *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*. Bd. 1–2. München, Beck, 1918. Bd. 1: 572 S.; Bd. 2: 652 S.; Toynbee A.J. *A Study of History*. Vol. 1–12. London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1934–1961. 576 p.

from psychology to civilizations and made them bring about complicated interrelated changes.

Concepts, such as civilization (A.J. Toynbee) or culture (O. Spengler), were abstract and hard to define. Therefore, later historians abandoned them as macro-historical instruments. Samuel P. Huntington, an American political scientist of the late 20th century, tried to revive the idea by connecting civilization to religion, but his effort was then heavily criticized, even though it found some adherents. Yet, the attention, which the efforts of O. Spengler and A.J. Toynbee attracted in cultural circles, exposed a disappointment with the academic writing of history. History had been an academic favourite in the 19th century (together with biology), but it seemed to have exhausted its resources in the 20th century.

A new criticism of the discipline of history developed after the Second World War in the wide circle of thinkers whose leaders called themselves postmodernists. Some of them, guided by Jean-François Lyotard [18], directed their criticism against the underlying 'grand narratives' (*grands récits*)¹³, which they defined as a synthesis of professional history and the dominant political forces in (Western) Europe in a praise of its success story. In the academic world of history, J.-F. Lyotard's criticism found one of its forms as micro-history. This direction turned its back consciously to the political history, which had been dominating the academic field of history since the time of L. von Ranke. Micro-history was born as a contrast not only to grand narratives, but also to the limitations of the range of vision, which since long had characterised the academic discipline of history.

The historiographical revolution (1960s to the early 21st century)¹⁴

Micro-history included the study of everyday life, as well as the odd persons and the outcasts with all sorts of ideas that these people cultivated (mentalities as the French researchers of the *Annales* direction called them, a term taken over to English and other languages). The studies of another type were devoted to the different conditions found in all societies, looking for general similarities rather than political oddities. Such studies were labelled social history, and studies of this kind found its adherents rather among historians who were bred in a tradition of economic history than among political historians. After the Second World War, social history was beginning to lead its own life, stimulated by new trends in the social sciences and generally by sociological theories, including K. Marx's teaching. Social historians and micro-historians started out from different points of view, and they met in some hard debates, in spite of the fact that they shared the conviction that politics was a too narrow costume for the past of humankind. Their methods were different as social historians came from traditions of using statistical methods to measure the variations of life conditions in societies, while micro-historians most often started out from one example, which they might increase with other examples, letting the reader be convinced by the details rather than by the numbers.

¹³ Lyotard J.-F. *La condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir*. Paris, Minuit, 1979. 109 p. (In French)

¹⁴ Section 5 is a short version of the argument in Torstendahl R. *Den historiografiska revolutionen 1960–1990*. Lund, Studentlitteratur, 2017. 206 s., only published in Swedish [19].

Both directions were trying to show aspects of the past through accounts of evidences, even though they often chose different sorts of evidence. There is no inconsistency in merging the two, and this has often been the case in later practice of either social or micro-history. Their main adversary was traditional political history, because they wanted another perspective on the societies of the past. This is exactly what also other historians in the post-war era wanted, even though they did not find their perspectives covered by either social history or micro-history. I will briefly mention two other new perspectives.

When women had acquired the right to participate in academic life in the late 19th or early 20th century, they had also reacted against the absence of the female sex in history books. A demand rose for women's history, and it started as a genre of "her story" to compensate for "his story" as these female activists perceived traditional history. Women's history rather soon transformed into gender history, which became a parallel to the gender sociology that was already under way. It was successful and attracted many female researchers and a substantial number of males as well. The aim was no longer part of women's struggle for equality, a political aim, but to show what kind of roles women had had in different periods of the past and how the genders had related to each other. In gender history, social history interplayed closely with micro-studies.

A fourth new perspective on history that grew to importance from the 1960s to the late 20th century was global history (or transnational history, etc.). Its origins included the inspiration from Fernand Braudel, as well as A.J. Toynbee, and included both Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World System*¹⁵, where he organised the world in relation to trade relations in a centre and a periphery [20], and André Gunder Frank's investigations of the 'underdevelopment' of Latin American countries¹⁶, where history had a direct political implication. A real new take-off came in the first decade of the 21st century with many European nationalities represented among the authors.

In the present connection, the point is not to vindicate the concept of a historiographical revolution in these decades during the late 20th century, but rather to show the common dissatisfaction among well-known historians with the narrow field of earlier dominant political history. The fundamental idea, common to historians working with quite different directions of history, was that the earlier dominant professionals within the historical discipline had emptied the field of political history of fruitful ideas, while, at the same time, they blocked the door for new notions of what was fruitful. The protagonists of the different directions of the revolution of historiography embraced the conviction that the discipline of history had to renew itself, not in methods or presentation, but in the themes that were regarded as fruitful for a professional account of aspects of the past.

¹⁵ Wallerstein I. *The Modern World System*, vol. 1, New York: Acad. Press, 1974. The three following were published at irregular intervals and with other publishers, volume 4 only in 2011.

¹⁶ Most well-known is A.G. Frank's *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America. Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969, 409 p.

Accounting for aspects of the past in relation to “theory of history”

The idea of “history as representation” has invaded and captured the so-called “theory of history” to give it an aesthetic sense, since Hayden White launched this idea in the early 1970s. The notion relates closely to narrativism, and White consequently regarded historians as storytellers and their works as art products. White’s ideas became very popular among historians interested in the analysis of historiography, and they started to debate this matter with each other.

In a couple of earlier articles, I have tried to show that the so-called “theory of history” does not analyse texts by contemporary historians, but rather analyse texts by other “theoreticians of history”. The contemporary philosophy of history or theory of history thus has abdicated from any function as guide for historians. On the contrary, the distance between “theory of history” and actual practice of historians (in the first hand historians employed as professors or other teachers at universities and working at least partly with their own professional research) has become very wide. Historians do their research work undisturbed by theoreticians and their ideas about historiography, and these do not aim their research for the use of historians [21, 22]¹⁷. In the first of the mentioned articles, I have tried to discuss the road from analysis of historians’ works to the present discussions between theoreticians. In the second one, I have tried to analyse in detail what some of them have said in specific works.

One may only hope that a new generation of philosophically minded historians will accept the challenge of the theory of history and give to it a direct relation to what historians do in their research work when they try to form new knowledge about aspects of the past. The sometimes thrilling telling of historical adventures of the past is certainly worth analysis, not as history answering to demands of historical professionalism, but rather as narratives answering to literary demands as entertainment and production of present culture¹⁸. The latter genre is different from the former, even if occasionally one may find a historical work that historians admire for its new results and non-professionals find entertaining for its vivid presentation.

In my opinion, the current form of “theory of history” has its base in a fundamental mix-up of refer and represent. History refers to the past, but it is no “representation” of the past and far less a “reconstruction” of the past. Both historians and theorists ought to keep this distinction in mind.

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¹⁷ The two articles I refer to are Torstendahl R. Historiography and theory. In: Mankov A.E., Dubovitskaya M.O. (Eds.) *S liubov’yu k nauke. K yubileyu T.A. Toshtendal’-Salychevoi* [With Devotion to Scholarship. For Tamara Torstendahl Salycheva on Her 75th Anniversary]. Moscow, RGGU, 2021, pp. 84–101.; Torstendahl R. What is the objective of “theory of history”? *Filosofiya. Zhurnal Vysshei Shkoly Ekonomiki*, 2020, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 93–112. doi: 10.17323/2587-8719-2020-3-93-112.

¹⁸ A very good example of this type of historical literature is Hilary Mantel’s three-volume literary picture of the life of Thomas Cromwell under the titles of *Wolf Hall*, *Bring up the Bodies*, and *The Mirror and the Light*. Such a work can give the historian much cause to reflection, but Mantel never says that she meant it to be “history”.

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ОРИГИНАЛЬНАЯ СТАТЬЯ

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**Исторические сочинения или анализ событий прошлого:
историографический выбор в европейской исторической науке**

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Аннотация

В статье рассмотрены различия между двумя подходами к описанию исторических событий. Первый из них имеет целью сохранить память о деяниях прошлого посредством нарративов литературно-художественного типа, а второй основан на стремлении подкрепить доказательствами то или иное представление о прошлом. Со времен «Илиады» и «Одиссеи» исторические повествования имели риторический характер, воссоздавали яркую и живую картину событий. Надписи и анналы, а также надгробия и памятники были призваны стать свидетельствами происшествий минувших лет.

Создание захватывающих историй о прошлом всегда было более популярным, чем поиск исторических свидетельств. Однако в XIX в. ученые начали систематизировать свои сомнения в правдивости многих исторических сочинений. В конце XX – начале XXI в. такой критический подход был опровергнут многими «теоретиками истории», утверждавшими, что установить истину о прошлом невозможно, а следовательно, все исторические тексты должны рассматриваться как своего рода произведения литературы, претендующие в лучшем случае на символическую «правдивость». Сделан вывод о том, что приведенная выше точка зрения не находит подтверждения, поскольку имеет лишь внутренние «теоретические предпосылки». Обоснована необходимость анализа профессиональных исторических исследований, способных помочь в поиске нового исторического знания.

Ключевые слова: нарратив, повествование, доказательства, умозаключение, теория истории, философия истории, историография, репрезентация, истолкование, память, критика источников, постмодернизм

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