



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

History and Theory

Postgraduate Programme in History



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

COURSE CODE: M21HS01DC

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

History and Theory
Course Code: M21HS01DC
Semester-I

Master of Arts
History
Self Learning Material



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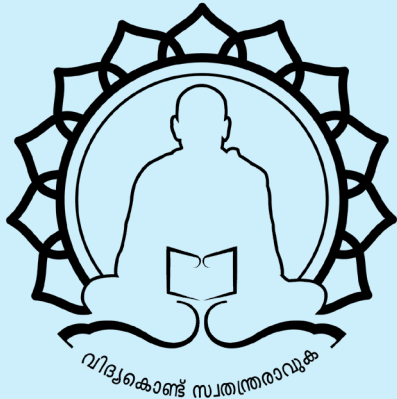
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Documentation

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History and Theory



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Message from Vice Chancellor

Dear

I greet all of you with deep delight and great excitement. I welcome you to the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University was established in September 2020 as a state initiative for fostering higher education in open and distance mode. We shaped our dreams through a pathway defined by a dictum 'access and quality define equity'. It provides all reasons to us for the celebration of quality in the process of education. I am overwhelmed to let you know that we have resolved not to become ourselves a reason or cause a reason for the dissemination of inferior education. It sets the pace as well as the destination. The name of the University centers around the aura of Sreenarayanaguru, the great renaissance thinker of modern India. His name is a reminder for us to ensure quality in the delivery of all academic endeavors.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University rests on the practical framework of the popularly known "blended format". Learner on distance mode obviously has limitations in getting exposed to the full potential of classroom learning experience. Our pedagogical basket has three entities viz Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling and Virtual modes. This combination is expected to provide high voltage in learning as well as teaching experiences. Care has been taken to ensure quality endeavours across all the entities.

The university is committed to provide you stimulating learning experience. The PG programme in History is expected to expose the learners to the intricacies of historian's craft through modules on historiography and historical methods. The learners will be trained on the skills for understanding historical forces enabling them to move further in to the complexities of historical narration in order to revisit history with the right perspective. The modules derived multi-disciplinary flavour due to their cross border penetration. We assure you that the university student support services will closely stay with you for the redressal of your grievances during your studentship.

Feel free to write to us about anything that seems relevant regarding the academic programme.

Wish you the best.



Regards,

Dr. P.M. Mubarak Pasha

01.03.2023

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Evolution of History as an Enquiry into Past

BLOCK-01



Early Traditions of Historical Enquiry

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ understand Greek, Roman, Chinese, Arabic and Indian historical traditions
- ♦ learn the contributions of major historians
- ♦ learn different trends in history writing
- ♦ acquainted with the central philosophy of thinkers

Background

History narrates the tale of the past. The actions of our forefathers, the gods, tales of valiant heroes, and the traditions of various civilizations have become the subject matter of such chronicles. History originates from the Greek term 'historia,' which signifies "inquiry." Historiography entails both the composition of historical accounts and the study of the theory of historical writing.

One can observe disparities in the quality and character of historical literature generated throughout different ages. These variations mirror the transformations in the social, political, cultural, and intellectual aspects of human existence. The historical temperament of Greek and Roman historians differed from that of Church and Arabic historians during the Middle Ages. Hence, historiography reveals the evolving approaches and intellectual trends of each period.

Keywords

Greek and Roman history, Hellenistic History, Chinese history, *Caritas, prasatis, Itihasa-Purana* tradition, Jaina and Buddhist historical tradition.

Discussion

1.1.1 Ancient Greece

The recording of Greek history was initiated by a group of writers called logographers, who compiled the oral traditions



♦ *Logographers initiated the tradition of recording Greek History*

of towns, peoples, and places. The influence of logographers diminished when Herodotus began writing the history of ancient Greece. The tradition of writing history was then carried on by numerous other Greek historians who made an effort to rectify the drawbacks of their predecessors.

♦ *Can these compositions be considered as history?*

Understanding the past seems to be a universal human need in order to unravel early historical traditions. According to Herbert Butterfield, the historiography of pre-classical times can be mainly distinguished into three types: ballads and epics, annals of the rulers, and Hebrew scriptures. Can these compositions be considered as history? R.G. Collingwood argued that 'true history' did not exist four thousand years ago. This explanation was provided through the question of theocratic history and myth in the pre-classical compositions.

Theocratic History and Myth

♦ *Collingwood viewed pre-classical compositions as quasi-history.*

Collingwood believed that the pre-classical compositions possess the characteristics of quasi-history, rather than "true history." He sought to elucidate this type of quasi-history by providing examples from early Mesopotamian documents. He argued that the classical records of the Sumerians resemble history, but do not constitute history because the narratives fail to address the fundamental question; the recorded actions are not of human origin, but rather of divine nature. Consequently, he referred to the facts recorded in such documents as quasi-history, as they attempt to convey statements about the past.

♦ *Theocratic history and myth are the two types of quasi-history*

Collingwood subsequently termed this type of history as 'theocratic history'. The term "history" does not imply scientific investigation, but rather the presentation of known facts to those who are unaware of them. In addition to theocratic history, there exists another form of quasi-history known as 'myth'. According to Collingwood, myths are not concerned with human actions, but rather involve theogony, which refers to the relationships among various gods or elements of divine nature. Taking all these factors into consideration, Collingwood viewed pre-classical compositions such as ballads, epics, annals, and Hebrew literature as belonging to the two categories of quasi-history.

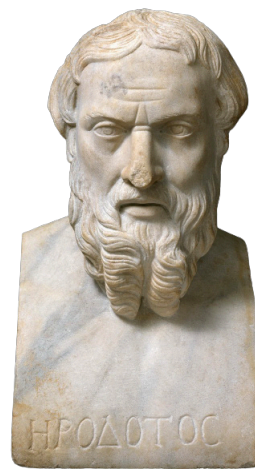
Consequently, the Near East was primarily dominated by the two forms of quasi-history, theocratic history and myth, until the emergence of Greece. The systematic history of ancient Greece developed through the works of Greek



♦ *The systematic history of ancient Greece emerged through Herodotus and Thucydides*

historians from the fifth century BCE, namely Herodotus and Thucydides. The Greeks possessed an awareness that history is, or can be, a science and is concerned with human actions. Collingwood argued that Greek history should not be considered quasi-history, as it strives to seek answers to questions. It is neither theocratic nor mythical; instead, it is humanistic. Nonetheless, certain works do exhibit elements of theocratic and mythical aspects. Homer's work, for instance, is not regarded as research, but as a theocratic legend. Taking all this into account, what is crucial in Greek works is that they possess elements of historical consciousness.

1.1.1.2 Herodotus (484-430 BCE)



♦ *Authored the book *The Histories* giving a detailed record of the Greco-Persian wars*

Herodotus was born in Halicarnassus (present-day Bodrum) in Caria in over 484 BCE. He is known for his book, *The Histories*. The work is a detailed record of the Greco-Persian Wars. The introduction of the book states that the purpose of the Histories was to preserve the deeds of the Greeks and Barbarians for future generations. The work is divided into nine parts, primarily dealing with the lives of Croesus, Cyrus, Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius, and Xerxes, as well as the battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, Artemisium, Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale. However, Herodotus has also provided a narration of the customs, dress, manners, morals, and beliefs of the people of the eastern Mediterranean.

His style and method

Herodotus is widely considered to be the first writer to imply a systematic investigation of historical facts. Therefore, he is bestowed with the title of "father of history" by the first-century BCE Roman orator, Cicero. Shotwell describes

♦ *aim of the historian is to understand the reason for the events*

♦ *Critiqued for using second hand information.*

him as the “Homer of the Persian Wars.” According to Herodotus, the purpose of writing history is humanistic, where he describes the deeds of men. He does not confine his attention to the events but rather considers these events in a humanistic way as the actions of human beings. He, therefore, asserts that the sole aim of the historian is to understand the reason for the events. Accordingly, Collingwood credits Herodotus for the establishment of scientific history. Herodotus has been criticized for depicting far-off events reported to him second or third-hand. Many authors, including Thucydides, accused him of fabricating stories for entertainment. However, Herodotus states that he merely reports the events he has witnessed and been told.

1.1.1.3 Thucydides (460-396 BCE)



♦ *Athenian historian known for The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Thucydides was an Athenian historian who recorded a day-to-day account of the Peloponnesian War, which was his most significant contribution to history. The ‘History of the Peloponnesian War’ recounts the war between Sparta and Athens during the fifth century BCE, continuing until 411 BCE. He passed away in 396 BCE, leaving his work incomplete. This work consists of eight books.

His Style and Method

Collingwood ascribed Thucydides credit for his emphasis on the humanistic purpose and the self-revelatory function of history. In contrast to Herodotus, Thucydides explicitly emphasizes that historical inquiry should rely on evidence. He believed that the historical process was a rational process unaffected by supernatural phenomena. Therefore, he refused to accept the words of the oracles and maintained

◆ *Known as the father of the scientific Method of history'*

a distance from myths, legends, and miracles. As a result, he wrote as an eyewitness for most of the events he described. In this regard, Herodotus may be considered the father of history, but Thucydides is referred to as the 'father of the scientific method of history' due to his historical accuracy and truthfulness.

1.1.1.4 Limitations of the Greek Historical Method

◆ *Greek historians depended on eye witness accounts*

The analysis of the major historical works of Greek history suggests two crucial aspects. Firstly, for historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides, historical sources referred to the reports of the facts by the eyewitness. Secondly, their historical method involved creating these narratives. According to Collingwood, in the fifth century BCE, Greek historians must have extensively interrogated the eyewitness accounts to ensure the coherence of the narrative. However, according to Collingwood, these methods had three limitations.

- i. It imposed a limitation on its users' historical perspective. Collingwood suggests that an eyewitness account could not extend beyond the span of living memory. Hence, the approach employed by Herodotus and Thucydides cannot be considered reliable from a scientific standpoint. They are merely logographies.
- ii. The second limitation of the method was that it prevented him from choosing his subject. The only matter the Greek historian can write about is the events that occurred within the living memory of the people. Therefore, Collingwood quotes, "...instead of the historian choosing his subject, the subject chooses the historian...".
- iii. Thirdly, the Greek historical method made it impossible to criticize, enhance, or revise a history once written.

◆ *Limitations were the shortness of historical perspective, lack of choice and being impossible to criticise.*

1.1.1.5 The Hellenistic Period

◆ *The period between the conquest of Alexander and the Roman conquest of Egypt.*

Before Alexander, Greek history was primarily focused on a single social unit at a specific moment. The historiography of the Hellenistic period holds significant importance in comprehending the transformations that occurred in Greek history. The Hellenistic era encompasses a span of two centuries between Alexander's conquest and the Roman conquest of Egypt.

Collingwood affirms that Greek historiography surmounted three limitations in the Hellenistic period. These limitations are as follows:

- i. Firstly, the Greeks gradually abandoned their 'cultural particularism'. The parochialism was rooted in the linguistic and cultural distinction between the Greeks and the Barbarians.
- ii. Secondly, they relinquished their 'city-state particularism'. In doing so, the 'world' transformed into a unified political entity, surpassing its mere geographical connotation. It also acquired historical significance, with the entire empire of Alexander sharing a common history within the Greek world.
- iii. Thirdly, Greek historiography transcended the issue of methodology. They recognized the limitations of constructing a world history solely based on eyewitness testimonies. Consequently, a new approach emerged, known as 'compilation'. This method involved appropriating materials from 'authorities,' which refers to the works of preceding historians. Collingwood refers to this as the 'scissors and pastes historical method.' Polybius vividly exemplifies this novel form of history.

◆ Collingwood labels the new method of Hellenistic period as "Scissors and paste"

◆ Historical material taken from the works of previous historians.

1.1.2 Ancient Rome

The history of Roman civilization can be traced from the 8th century BCE to the 5th century CE. Following the Greeks, the Romans made significant contributions to historical writing. One prominent figure in Roman history was Julius Caesar, renowned for his military achievements. He wrote the work "The De Bello Gallico," which presents Caesar's account of the Gallic War. Although criticized for his actions during the war, he sought to justify them through this work. The story goes that the Gallic Wars occurred in self-defense when Caesar and his army faced an attack in Gaul. When the Celtic tribe known as the Helvetians migrated through their province, a group of allies sought Caesar's assistance against them. This prompted Caesar to gather his army. The primary objective of his work was to establish himself as a military hero.

◆ Julius Caesar's work *De Bello Gallico* create the image of a military hero

Similarly, the Roman historical tradition encompasses numerous other reliable and unbiased historical accounts of the past.



1.1.2.1 Polybius (200-118 BCE)

♦ *His Histories narrates the story of the Mediterranean world from 221 to 146 BCE.*

The concept of a new kind of history of the Hellenistic period was fully developed in the works of Polybius, who is renowned for his book *Histories*. In his *Histories*, he narrates the tale of the Mediterranean world from 221 to 146 BCE, encompassing the expansion and political advancement of Rome. His work provides a valid analysis of different Hellenistic versions of history.

♦ *Polybius insisted that history should be written by those who have witnessed the events*

Polybius also documented the conflicts between Hannibal and Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, including the Battle of Ticinus, the Battle of the Trebia, the Siege of Saguntum, the Battle of Lilybaeum, and the Battle of Rhone Crossing. In the twelfth volume of his work, Polybius emphasized that history should be written by those who have witnessed the events. They should examine documents, review geographical information, and consider political experiences.

♦ *The Hellenistic tradition of historical thought can be regarded as the basis for Roman historiography*

The origins of Roman historiography can be traced back to earlier Greek historiography. The Greek historian of the Hellenistic period, Polybius, is renowned for his work that describes the ascent of the Roman Republic to dominion in the Mediterranean world. With Polybius, the Hellenistic tradition of historical thought was passed on to Rome. Alongside Cato the Elder (234-149 BCE), he can be considered one of the founding fathers of Roman historiography. However, Collingwood argued that the initial development of Roman historiography is evident in the work of Livy, who comprehended the history of the Roman world from its inception.

1.1.2.2 Livy (59 BCE - CE 17)

♦ *Credited with the work History of Rome*

♦ *Livy outlined the history of Rome from the foundation of the city*

Livy was regarded as a philosophical historian and is credited with the publication of "History of Rome." It is believed that the work consisted of 142 books, but only 35 have survived. Livy depicted the history of Rome from its foundation, with the main content of the book covering the Punic, Social, and Civil wars. Additionally, there was a concise account of the Roman constitution, economy, and other aspects.

Collingwood compared the works of Polybius and Livy and argued that Polybius employed the scissor-and-paste method only in the introductory phrases of his work. However, Livy's work, in contrast, is not just limited to the introduction; rather, the entire body of his work is based on

◆ Gathered traditional records and merged them in to a coherent narrative

the scissor-and-paste method. Livy's primary task was to gather the traditional records of Rome and merge them into a coherent narrative of Roman history.

The following is Collingwood's assessment of Livy's work.

- i. Livy does not claim original research or an original method. Moreover,
- ii. He emphasises moral purposes, aiming for his readers to perceive the distant past and understand that early Roman society was uncorrupted and straightforward.
- iii. In Livy's perspective, history is humanistic, and thus, the historian's mission is to portray the actions of individuals.
- iv. However, Livy's method failed as it proved insufficient to handle the complexity of his material.

◆ Livy's method failed because it was too simple to manage with the complexity of his material

1.1.2.3 Tacitus (55-120 CE)

Cornelius Tacitus was an aristocrat by birth, character, and education. He received training in oratory and law. Tacitus' major works include *The Histories* and *The Annals*. Other works by him include *Dialogues on Orators*, *Agricola*, and *de Germania*. *The History* provides an account of Roman emperors from Galba to the death of Domitian (68-96 CE). It focuses on the history of the Flavian dynasty. *The Annals* extend the story further back and record the emperors of the Julian house (14-68 CE) up to Nero. The method employed by Tacitus in the *Histories* resembled that of an orator. He seized every opportunity to narrate events, identify causes, and interpret movements.

◆ *Histories and the Annals*
◆ Tacitus method resembled that of an orator

Collingwood criticizes Tacitus as a historian. He notes that Tacitus imitates the narrow perspective of fifth-century Greeks without imitating their virtues. Tacitus is overly fixated on the history of affairs in Rome, neglecting the Empire as a whole. His attitude towards the philosophical foundation of history is considered trivial by Collingwood. Hence, Collingwood regards him more as a rhetorician than a profound thinker.

◆ According to Collingwood, Tacitus is defective as a historian.

It is said that Tacitus introduced a new approach known as psychological-didactic. However, according to Collingwood, this approach is a deficiency and indicates a declining standard of historical integrity. Tacitus'



◆ *His approach was a flaw and indicated a declining standard of historical integrity.*

◆ *Tacitus had a moral view of history*

moral disapproval led to two main shortcomings: limited scope and bias. His narrow focus prevented him from producing a comprehensive history of the empire, tracing its developments, achievements, and economic growth.

Tacitus had a moralistic view of history. He believed that the primary duty of a historian is to pass judgment on the actions of men, preserving the deeds of the virtuous while subjecting the wicked to criticism. Will Durant remarked that, according to Tacitus, all Roman emperors were evil men.

1.1.3 Ancient China

◆ *China has been called “the paradise of historians”*

◆ *Princely houses maintained their archivists and astrologers who recorded the events.*

Herbert Butterfield suggests that China is often referred to as “the paradise of historians.” The historical tradition of China is unparalleled in terms of its longevity, internal coherence, prestige, and literary productivity. Butterfield highlighted several factors that influenced the Chinese historical mindset. He provided further elaboration on these circumstances.

◆ *Ancient China witnessed a rationalist movement in historical tradition*

◆ *Historiographers became recognized as part of the Chinese civil service*

- i. The recording of past events is a Chinese way of communicating with the divine order. Every temple has its archivist to record registers, family trees, contracts, and decisions of oracles. Alongside them, the princely houses maintained their archivists and astrologers who recorded the events.
- ii. Ancient China witnessed a ‘rationalist movement,’ which brought incidental support to history by insisting on ‘immortality’ that will be protected in the memory of men for ages.
- iii. The period from the fifth to the third century BC, known as the period of the Warring States, brought Chinese culture to its climax. This movement helped Chinese history to construct wisdom that is necessary for planning life and government.
- iv. After Szuma Ch’ien, historiographers became recognized as part of the Chinese civil service.

1.1.3.1 Confucius (551-478 B.C)

Confucius emphasized the significance of history in promoting reverence for the past and respecting the examples set by ancestors. His primary work, the Five Classics or

♦ Five Ching or Canonical Books, reflects the historical tradition of the period.

Canonical Books, reflects the historical tradition of that era. The fourth and fifth books in this collection consist of historical narratives. The fourth book, known as Chunqiu or Spring and Autumn Annals, provides a concise account of the reign of the twelve dukes of Lu from 722 to 484 BCE. The fifth book, called Shujing or Book of History, is a compilation of royal speeches, feudal documents, and edicts.

♦ Will Durant remarks that Confucius cannot be regarded so much as a historian.

According to Will Durant, Confucius cannot be regarded as a historian in the strict sense because he presented a biased account of past events, incorporating fictional speeches and stories to impart moral and wisdom teachings. However, he can be seen as a teacher who idealized the country's past to inspire young minds with the stories carefully chosen from legends and history.

♦ Confucianism has influenced the spiritual and intellectual tradition of Chinese people

What methods might have contributed to the widespread influence of Chinese tradition among the general populace? You may have come across Confucianism in your studies. Confucianism primarily encompasses the teachings of Confucius, a scholar and government official from the 6th century BCE. It has profoundly influenced the spiritual and intellectual heritage of the Chinese people and exerted a strong impact on China's historical tradition. The Chinese term "shi" means "history" and initially referred to the court scribes responsible for recording events relevant to the ruler. Thus, ancient historical records mainly consisted of records about rulers.

1.1.3.2 Szuma Ch'ien (145-85 BCE)

♦ Szuma Ch'ien was the father of Chinese historiography based on the reality of the past.

Szuma Ch'ien, a prominent historian of the 1st century BCE, is considered the 'grand historian of China.' T.H. Barrett states that Szuma Ch'ien pioneered Chinese historiography by focusing on the actual events of the past.

♦ Szuma Ch'ien was regarded as the first to write a comprehensive history of China from antiquity to later times

Szuma Ch'ien served as the grand historian-astrologer during the Han dynasty, establishing the tradition of historical writing in China. He is credited as the first person to compose a comprehensive history of China, spanning from ancient times to the present. His most notable work is the Shi Ji, also known as the Historical Records. The majority of this text comprises accounts detailing the lives of renowned individuals and interactions with foreign peoples.

Other features of the work include:

- i. Shih-Ji is not merely a history of a region or a dy-



♦ *Szuma Chi'en did not attempt explanation and interpretation.*

♦ *He saw history as a product of man's will and did not seek to comprehend it.*

- nasty but a history of the world as perceived by its author. The book consists of 130 chapters, covering the history of China from the era of the Yellow Emperor to Szuma Chien's time.
- ii. The book relied on a diverse collection of source materials. While the earlier part of the book is steeped in myth, the work became progressively more detailed and precise in the latter section, particularly during the Han dynasty. He approached the sources with great care and validated his use of over seventy-five official records in writing the history of the Han dynasty.
 - iii. His work transcends the confines of the court. Moreover, instead of organizing facts chronologically, he divided the work into five sections.
 - iv. His work goes beyond the boundaries of the court.
 - v. In a critique of his work, Herbert Butterfield argued that Szuma Chi'en made no attempt at explanation or interpretation. There were no elements of historicity as the author failed to establish connections, developments, and causation. Butterfield further contended that Szuma Chi'en viewed history as a product of human will and did not seek to comprehend it.

1.1.3.3 The Dynastic Histories by Pan Ku

♦ *Pan Ku, who wrote the History of the Former Han Dynasty.*

One of the impressive elements of Chinese historical writing was the collection of 24 *Standard Histories*. Each Standard History essentially comprised the history of one dynasty, which was written by the succeeding dynasty. This tradition was originally established by Pan Ku, who wrote the History of the Former Han Dynasty.

♦ *When a dynasty comes to an end, the account of the former dynasty is compiled with the succeeding dynasty.*

The historical narrative of Szuma Chi'en did not focus on the history of a specific dynasty but encompassed the entire history up to his time. Pan Ku, who followed Szuma Chi'en, adopted a narrower perspective in writing history. By solely documenting the Former Han dynasty's history, Pan Ku established a new pattern of historical writing for himself. Eventually, it became customary for each dynasty to compile historical material for its successors. To achieve this, numerous officials were appointed to the History Bureau, tasked with producing a collective and corroborative work. In such narratives, when a dynasty came to an end, the comprehensive account of the former dynasty had to be compiled for the

succeeding dynasty. Therefore, the “standard histories” were produced following the initial pattern set by Pan Ku.

1.1.3.4 Liu Chih-Chi (661-721 CE)

The official history in China has faced significant criticism. Liu’s Shih-tung (On History) contains criticisms of the ‘standard histories.’ It is the initial work of critical historiography in China, addressing the question of how history was and should be written. Chinese historians such as Szuma Kuang and Chu Hsi directly questioned the usefulness of dynastic histories. Since the time of the Han dynasty, historians in imperial China were conscious of the historical tradition. All Chinese dynasties were obligated to maintain the historiographical tradition and were not permitted to disrupt its continuity.

◆ *Contains criticism against the ‘standard histories’*

1.1.4 Ancient West Asia

Collingwood suggests that the medieval historian continued the tradition of Hellenistic and Roman historiography. They primarily depend on facts and traditions, and there was no method to criticize those traditions. What was the pre-Islamic historical tradition? According to C. J. Lyall, pre-Islamic history is predominantly the tradition of ballad or saga, or it was half legend and half history.

◆ *Pre-Islamic history is pre-eminently the tradition of ballad or saga*

In the pre-Islamic age, in present day Algeria, St. Augustine became the most significant figure of early church historiography. He is famous for two major works. *The Confessions*, his autobiography and *The City of God (De Civitate Dei)*. *The City of God* was composed of twenty-two books between 413-426 AD.

◆ *Major works: The Confessions and The City of God*

Augustine observed the historical process as a struggle between good and evil, virtue and vice, divine and demonic and theocratic and secular. He saw history as confirming a divine plan. All human achievements are not due to the actions of the human intellect but due to god’s grace. It is God who plans human actions. Such history, which places God at the centre of human actions, is called sacred history, salvation history, providential history or patristic history. This was the main historical view of the Europeans in the Middle Ages.

◆ *The book became the basis of Catholic theology.*
◆ *Formulated the political theology of Middle Age.*

The term *Tarikh* in Arabic means the ‘organization of materials’; it is considered ‘history’. It is observed that



♦ *Tarikh considered history*

♦ *Islamic history was initially written in the biblical model*

the first histories of the Islamic world were written in the ninth century in the form of the biblical model on the pre-Islamic Sassanian histories of Persian kings, oral traditions of genealogies, warfare, and tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. Scholars believe that the origin of the historiographical tradition of the Arabic world is to be sought in the Quran and Hadith.

♦ *Factors that stimulated the historical writing of the Islamic world.*

Along with Hadith, biographical dictionaries also began to appear in the ninth century. In such narratives, the first subject of compilation was the contemporaries of the prophet and his immediate successors. These dictionaries provided a means to check the veracity of Hadiths. According to Thompson, the decisive influence behind Muslim historiography first came from the conquest of the vast empire. The second influence came from conquered Persia. At the same time, the third influence was the common chronology which began with the Hejira or migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina (622 CE). Therefore, the enthusiasm established by the new religion and the beginning of common chronology were the main factors that stimulated the historical writing of the Islamic world.

♦ *Earliest recorder of Mohammed's campaign was Muhammed Ben Ishaq.*

Muhammad Bin Ishaq is said to have been the earliest recorder of Mohammed's campaign. Some of the information was acquired from Jews and Christians in Arabia, whom he calls "the people of the former learning." He wrote the history of the rule of the Umayyad dynasty of Damascus.

1.1.4.1 Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 CE)

♦ *His work Kitab-al-Ibar divided into three books.*

The most renowned thinker and historian of the Arab world was Ibn Khaldun. Ibn Khaldun was an Arab scholar, social scientist, and historian. He was born into a Berber family of scholars and statesmen. His work, Kitab-al-Ibar, consists of three books. The first book deals with civilizations, their characteristics, and their influence on people. The second book elaborates on the story of the Arabs, and the third book covers the history of Maghrib (Northwest Africa and Berber dynasties).

♦ *Muqaddima or Prolegomena (Introduction) is the work on the science of history and the development of society.*

The major work of Ibn Khaldun was *Muqaddimah* or Prolegomena (Introduction). It is an intricate work on the science of history and the development of society. In this work, he studied the general laws of historical development, explained the causes of historical change, and stressed the importance of a cyclic view of history. By considering man's physical environment, Khaldun concluded that man



is a political being who needs to be associated with others. Therefore, man sees the state as a natural growth.

◆ *History is generated by material cause, formal cause, efficient cause and final cause.*

According to Khaldun, “history is information about human social organization, which itself is identical to world civilization.” He insisted that history is generated by material cause, formal cause, efficient cause, and final cause. By material cause, he meant environmental factors like geography, climate, and fertility of the soil, etc. The formal cause implies the political factor. Rosental viewed the efficient cause of Khaldun as an abstract idea, a teleological principle. His final cause is considered to be ethical and philosophical.

◆ *Al-umran, meaning sociology and asabiyah, means group feeling.*

E Sreedharan quoted that Khaldun attempted to explain the historical process in terms of sociological phenomena. He regarded his new approach as a new science and called it al-umran, meaning sociology or the science of human society. Khaldun also propounded a new word, asabiyah, which means “group feeling.” It is a feeling generated by blood ties or by long or close contacts. Khaldun suggests that this “group feeling” is found in the more primitive kind of social structure.

◆ *Tried to link political science and sociological enquiry*

According to Herbert Butterfield, Khaldun stands alone among Islamic writers because of his effort to link history with political science and forms of sociological enquiry. According to Thompson, sociologists considered him the founder of the social and economic interpretation of history. Western scholars like Y Lacoste remark, “If Thucydides is the inventor of history, Ibn Khaldun introduces history as a science.” According to Arnold Toynbee, Muqaddima is “... undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place...”.

1.1.5 Ancient India

Today, our understanding of history has undergone significant changes. We no longer view history simply as the account of monarchs, wars, and praises. Instead, historians now focus on constructing histories encompassing society, gender, culture, environment, and other realms of knowledge. However, many of these subjects find no place in the ancient works we consider historical. So, what was the primary focus of these works? It becomes evident that many of these works were authored by the ruling elite, whose duty was to legitimize the ruler’s power. In such writings, the majority of the population, including the common people,



♦ *Many of these works were authored by the ruling elite, whose duty was to legitimize the ruler's power.*

♦ *Historical consciousness: awareness of events*

♦ *Historical traditions: construction representing the past*

♦ *Historical writing: creates categories of texts to its requirement.*

♦ *Embeddedness refers to the 'gradual emergence' of historical consciousness*

♦ *Gatha and narasamasi were initially part of religious tradition.*

♦ *Later these became oral traditions.*

were excluded from the narrative. Consequently, modern historians such as Romila Thapar raise questions regarding the early lack of historical consciousness in India.

Before delving into this matter, it is essential to understand the distinction between historical consciousness, historical tradition, and historical writing. According to Thapar, historical consciousness refers to an awareness of events and individuals from the past, asserting that the narrated accounts are factual. Historical traditions involve constructing representations of the past, which can be utilized to orient the present. Historical writing primarily draws from historical traditions and categorizes texts according to its needs. Scholars such as V.S. Pathak and Romila Thapar propose a three-phase conceptualization of the past. The initial phase involves the narrative of origins, characterized by rigidity and the significance of deities in every action. The second phase consists of narratives concerning lineages (vamsas). The final phase revolves around narratives focused on dynasties and kings, influenced by the vamsa charitra format.

Embedded Tradition and Externalised History

According to Romila Thapar, the evolution of embedded tradition dates back to the *dana-stutis* (praises of gift-giving) from 1400-1000 BCE. The embeddedness refers to the gradual emergence of historical consciousness from the ritual texts. In the tradition of *dana-stutis*, human heroes were praised for their successful raids and acquisition of cattle wealth. The event and the hero became part of the remembered tradition. Externalized history exhibits a more apparent historical consciousness, as seen in chronicles or biographies.

1.1.5.1 Forms Of Historical Compositions: Gatha, Narasamsi, Akhyana, Itivrtta, Vamsa And Vamsanucharita

The oral tradition, such as *gatha* and *narasamasi* (hero-lauds), has been a part of India's tradition since the Rig Vedic period. As previously mentioned, the hero-lauds were composed by the recipients of gifts, namely the priests, who used to praise the name of the donor. According to Pathak, *gatha* and *narasamasi* were initially a part of the religious tradition. Later, these poems were classified as part of the oral tradition of historical compositions.

To this genre, the *akhyana*, *ithivrtta*, *vamsa*, and *vamsa charitra*, *Purana*, and *Itihasa* were added in the later Vedic

- ♦ Oral traditions are absorbed in the *Itihasa-Purana*
- ♦ Origin from *dana-stutis* hymns.

period. By that time, the *gatha* and *narasamasi* were linked together to form *akhyana*. *Akhyana* signifies the presentation of history in a narrative style. For example, the *Devasuram* mentioned in *Brahmana* literature narrated the war between gods and demons. According to Pathak, *akhyana* simply means a historical narrative. *Itivrtta* denotes the traditional account of people and events. *Vamsas* are the royal genealogies. This was later developed into *vamsanucharitas*. *Vamsanucharitas*, according to Thapar, are continuous lists of succession with few comments.

1.1.5.2 *Itihasa-Purana* Tradition: The Development of Historical Tradition

The *Itihasa-Purana* tradition is one of the best examples of understanding the Indian historical tradition. It is believed that the oral traditions of the Rig Vedic period were absorbed into the *Itihasa-Purana* traditions. Thapar believes that the origins of the *Itihasa-Purana* tradition can be traced back to the Vedic texts, particularly the *dana-stutis* hymns. The terms *Purana* and *Itihasa* were first mentioned in the *Atharva Veda* and appeared together in the *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas*, and the *Upanishads*. *Itihasa* literally means “thus indeed it was” or “verily thus it happened” and is now used to mean “history,” but in earlier times, it did not have the same meaning as modern history. According to Pargiter, *Itihasa* signifies a story based on fact, which implies actual traditional history. *Itihasa* can be an ordinary tale or quasi-historical, fanciful, mythological, or didactic.

- ♦ *Purana* and *Itihasa* were first mentioned in the *Atharva Veda*
- ♦ *Itihasa* means ‘thus indeed it was’ or ‘verily thus it happened’.

Pargiter defined *Puranas* as “old tales” or “ancient lore.” *Puranas* were associated with a single story, whether it was quasi-historical, mythological, or instructive. These narratives were composed during the first millennium CE. The *Vishnu* and *Matsya Puranas* are among the earlier texts. The *Puranas* primarily focused on rituals and myths related to the worship of deities. Some *Puranas* contained generalizations and a succession of lineages, known as *vamsanucharita*.

- ♦ *Puranas* were applied to a single story

One of the key questions that historians have asked over time is whether these traditions have historical validity. Can *Itihasa-Purana* be considered real history? Scholars believe that although these texts do not qualify as proper history, they do present past events arranged chronologically in the form of stories that provide insights into moral duties, well-being, and desires.

- ♦ *Itihasa* and *Puranas* were not proper history



♦ *Gave prominence to embedded historical consciousness*

According to Thapar, the historical consciousness found in various Vedic texts was reshaped and gradually evolved into a historical tradition in the Puranic texts. The inclusion of vamsanucharita in the Puranas is an important aspect of this historical tradition. Pargiter and Thapar suggest that this gave significance to the embedded historical consciousness and transformed it into a historical tradition.

1.1.5.3 Epics: Ramayana and Mahabharata

♦ *Mahabharata is called an Itihasa.*

♦ *Ramayana is generally regarded as kavya*

The great epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, depict the historical process of change. How do you categorise Mahabharata and Ramayana in the historical narrative? According to the words of Thapar, Mahabharata is referred to as an Itihasa. This is because, throughout the narrative, we can observe the history of inter-clan conflict. However, Ramayana is generally regarded as kavya because it is a poetic composition in Sanskrit.

♦ *Theme of Ramayana is the narrative of a hero in conflict.*

♦ *Conflict of two system: one declining and other becoming prominent state system.*

The main theme of Ramayana is the narrative of a hero in conflict. The conflict is not with the clan, as in Mahabharata, but with two types of polities—the kingdom and the chiefdom. The victory of Rama and the kingdom of Ayodhya demonstrated the idea of the 'ideal king,' and it showcased the transition of historical consciousness into the conflict of two systems—that is, one that is declining and the other that is becoming a prominent political system. In such a narrative, the forest dwellers and chiefdoms were characterized as raksasas, and the dominant kingship was praised. Therefore, Thapar viewed Ramayana as marking the beginning of the state as a kingdom, and the epic is considered a validation of it.

1.1.5.4 Lineages and Genealogies

♦ *The story of great flood*

The story of the great flood mentioned in the Matsya Purana and Satapatha Brahmana is the best example to demonstrate the transition from an ambiguous account of Manu to a specific lineage claiming to be historical. According to the narrative in Satapatha Brahmana, the Matsya avatar of Vishnu forewarned the first man, Manu, about an impending flood and instructed him to construct an ark. When the flood arrived, Manu secured his boat to the horn of the fish, thus saving all of humanity and eventually becoming a heroic figure. The story thus serves as an indication of elevating humans to heroic status.

Following the flood, Manu had ten sons who became the

♦ *Chandravamsa and Suryavamsa lineages comprised the continuous list of generations.*

progenitors of various Kshatriya lineages. Lineages such as *Chandravamsa* and *Suryavamsa* are familiar to us from the narratives of these epics. These lineages, according to Pargiter, constituted an unbroken series of generations. These genealogical lists held historical significance, as evident from the accounts of Megasthenes, who documented 153 generations in India up until the Mauryan period.

♦ *Dynastic list showed historical change.*

Another significant aspect of historical change is manifested through the enumeration of dynasties. Thapar asserts that these lists held authoritative weight. At this point, kings were identified not by their lineages but by their dynasties and caste. Unlike the lineages, the dynastic histories were distinct from one another. She argues that the dynastic sections were written in the future tense, a practice known as 'foretelling' the past, which emerged when the Puranas were composed. This historical tradition aimed to highlight and preserve a Brahmanical perspective of the past through sutas, the earlier genealogists.

♦ *Story of Devichandragupta emphasize the historical transition*

During this juncture, court poets and scholars explored new avenues of writing. These narratives were not historical accounts but possessed characteristics of historical traditions. One discernible feature of these narratives was the justification of contemporary politics by drawing on actions from the past. This is exemplified in the plays *Devichandraguptam* and *Mudraraksasa* by Visakhadatta. The precise date of the play *Devichandraguptam* is uncertain, but it is possible that the author lived during or after the Gupta period. *Devichandraguptam* centers around the defeat of Rama Gupta by the Sakas, who abduct his queen. This incident incites Rama Gupta's younger brother, who rescues the queen and avenges his brother's death by defeating the Sakas. The story portrays his ascent to the throne as Chandragupta II after his brother's assassination. *Mudraraksasa* highlights the historical transition from the Nanda dynasty to the Maurya period in 321 BCE.

♦ *Genealogical connections of yajnas acquired a new legitimization*

Thapar argues that in the Gupta period and beyond, when the significance of yajnas diminished, genealogical connections associated with yajnas took on a new form of legitimization. The sutas, the earlier genealogists, gradually gave way to the Brahmanas, who employed this source to exercise control over the past. Consequently, she posits that genealogies and descent lists serve as markers of linear time. The notion of linear time finds further validation through the mention of regnal years and eras in inscriptions, such as



the vikrama samvat (57 BCE) and Saka Samvat (78 AD).

1.1.5.5 Charitas/ Kavyas

In the early medieval period, a new form of historical narrative emerged, called *Charitas* or historical *kavyas*. These were historical epics or ornate bibliographies developed by royal court poets. The *Buddhacharita* of Asvaghosha was the first known example of this kind. Subsequently, texts like *Harshacharita* of Banabhatta, *Mushikavamsa* of Atula, *Vikramankadevacharita* of Bilhana, and *Prithviraj-vijaya* of Jayanaka were added to this genre.

♦ *Charitas are historical epic developed by court poets.*

According to V.S Pathak, in *Charitas* literature, historiography is based on court organization, which became an instrument of princely propagation and the propagation of new social values, chivalry, heroism, and loyalty. This genre set a new literary convention in the Indian historical tradition. Pathak elaborated on his view in the following ways. Firstly, the theme of the historical narrative was limited to some aspects of the life of the king. The broad themes of *Itihasa*, like moral, aesthetic, and spiritual aspects, were replaced and narrowed down to an account of events that glorify kingship.

♦ *Themes were limited to life of king.*

♦ *Glorifying king through five stages.*

Secondly, in the process of glorifying the king, these historical narratives were developed in five stages: the beginning (*prarambha*), the effort (*prayatna*), the hope of achieving the end (*pratyusha*), the certainty of achievement (*niyatapti*), and achievement (*pahalagama*). He argues that these stages provided order and chronology in the story.

♦ *He argues that these stages provided order and chronology in the story*

Harshacharita of Banabhatta is the first historical narrative of the early medieval period. Many scholars argued that the work is an incomplete account of the biography of Harshavardhana of Thaneshwar. However, Pathak critiqued this by arguing that the work is a complete and finished product. Bana describes *Harshacharita* as an *akhyayika*, which is an actual biography. The work is praised for the use of historical facts.

♦ *Harshacharita of Banabhatta praised for the praise of historical facts.*

Another historical work of immense importance in this genre is Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. The work consists of eight books, each book called *Taranga* (wave) by the author. The work is a continuous history of kings of Kashmir from mythical times to the date of its composition (1148-49). The work comprised information on political and administrative aspects, economy, society, caste, untouchability, etc.

♦ *Political and administrative aspects, economy, society, caste, untouchability*

1.1.5.6 Jaina and Buddhist Historical Tradition

In the earlier texts of the Jaina tradition, *Acharanga* and *Kalpasutra* narrate the episodes in the lives of Jaina teachers. This encouraged Jaina authors to record biographies of Jaina teachers and the succession of Jaina pontiffs. Thapar articulated that these Jaina authors critiqued the Brahmanical version of the past by demonstrating the biases of other traditions. She viewed that the early phase of their historical writing came from Magadha and the middle Ganga plain. However, a much more effective attempt at a historical view was evident in the period after the eighth century CE. The major historical tradition of the Jainas was the *pattavalis*, which records the succession list of Elders of the Sangha, Order, and kings and merchants.

◆ Narrate the episodes in the life of Jaina teachers

◆ Effective attempt came after eighth century

◆ In buddhism, history is based on Buddha and Sangha.

◆ Therefore they have a historical perspective.

◆ The texts were written in Pali.

◆ Vamsas, comprising lineages were produced.

As far as Buddhism is concerned, history is determined by persons and events about Buddha or Sangha. Therefore, historians view that the Buddhist tradition had an understanding of historical perspective. They had also developed a system of chronology where major events were dated in terms of the number of years from the death of Buddha.

The earliest Buddhists were concerned with the history of the Sangha, Order, and succession of elders. These texts were written in Pali, and thus the initial history of Sangha came to be called the Pali Canon. Corresponding to this narrative, there were *vamsas* comprising lineages, succession lists, and chronicles. *Buddhavamsas* regarded as the earliest of these texts. The Buddhist monastic chronicles of the Theravada sect of Sri Lanka, *Dipavamsa* (fourth century CE) and *Mahavamsa* (fifth century CE) are the other important historical writing.

Summarised Overview

We discuss the origins of historical writing traditions throughout the world in this unit. Herodotus established the discipline of historiography in Greek writings by relating his account of the Greco-Persian War in his works. Another significant early Greek historian who wrote about the Peloponnesian wars was Thucydides. While Thucydides specialised in a scientific method of source verification in his writing, Herodotus concentrated on a humanistic method but did not fully rely on the rationality of sources. Then came the Hellenistic era, which was affected by Alexander's conquests. Like its art, Roman historiography was influenced by



Greek historiography, and it all began with Polybius, a follower of Greek Hellenistic traditions. Other notable members of it were. Livy and Tacitus, often described as the 'Herodotus' and 'Thucydides' of Roman historiography.

China established a distinct historical tradition in Asia from the very beginning. The historical writing was initially influenced by the temple archival records, and later by the Chinese rationalist movement. Confucius, a well-known philosopher, emphasised the value of history in honouring the past. Szuma Chien, known as the Father of Chinese historiography, is credited with igniting the spirit of historiography in China by attempting to write from antiquity. Pan Ku, who wrote about the Han dynasty, was the first to write about dynastic history. Later historians like Liu-Chih-Chi, who was known for critical historiography, criticised the practise of writing dynastic histories.

The Tarikh or organisation of materials, served as the foundation for Arabic historical writing. Scholars are looking for the meaning of historical writing in the Quran and Hadith. Later, another dimension was added by the Prophet and his successors' biographical dictionary. One of the historians who chronicled the Prophet Muhammad's military campaigns was Muhammad Bin Ishaq. Ibn Khaldun, the most well-known Arab historian, is best known for his book Muqaddima, which emphasises a cyclical view of history.

Oral history comes first in the classical Indian historical traditions, followed by quasi-historical writings like the Itihasa-Purana tradition, and finally the epics. Dynastic histories written by court historians provide insight into a certain period, whereas caritas and kavyas, historical epics or elaborate bibliographies created by royal court poets to extol the kings, provide insight into a different period. Based on the life of Buddha, his sangha, and the Jain tirthankaras and teachers, the Jain and Buddhists also created their own historical tradition. Thus the early historical traditions all over the world employed various methods that cater to their geographical extent and socio-political circumstances to record their past

Self Assessment

1. Write a note on the reliability of Herodotus's work.
2. Discuss the historicity of the work *History of the Peloponnesian War*.
3. Write a note on the difference between Greco-Roman tradition of history.
4. What were the features of Chinese history writing?
5. Describe the tradition of dynastic histories in China.
6. Write a note on *Prasatis* and *Charitas*
7. Discuss the historiographical tradition of early India.

8. Examine the historicity of the Itihasa-Purana tradition.
9. What was the role of *Caritas* and *Kavyas* in constructing historical understanding?

Assignments

1. What was the style adopted by Greek and Roman historians?
2. Discuss the role of *sutas* in *vamsa* literature in Indian Historiography.
3. The Age of Augustus Caesar is the Golden Age in Rome's history of historical writing. Discuss.

Suggested Readings

1. Benedetto Croce, *History Its Theory and Practice*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1921.
2. E. H Carr, *What is History?* New York, 1961.

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4. RG Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1946
5. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, 11 volumes, Simon & Schuster, 1935-1975.
6. Romila Thapar, *The Past Before Us*, Historical Traditions of Early North India, 2013.
7. V S Pathak, *Ancient Historians of India: A Study in Historical Biographies*, Asia Publishing House, 1966.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



Development of Historical Thinking

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the development of modern historiography.
- ◆ familiarise the ideas of Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers.
- ◆ understand the approach of Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, and Vico-Herder.

Background

The Middle Ages in Europe are considered to have occurred between the 5th and 15th centuries. This period witnessed major historical events such as the decline of the Roman Empire, the Black Death, and the Crusades. All these events brought about significant changes in the outlook and philosophy of humanity. Historical understanding and philosophies began to evolve over time. In this regard, the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment were important periods in European history, spanning from the 14th century to the 18th century. The Renaissance was significant because it initiated a major shift in European thought, which eventually led to the development of the Enlightenment.

Keywords

Romanticism, Humanism, The Scientific Revolution, Cartesian, Anti-cartesian, Enlightenment

Discussion

1.2.1 Humanist Historiography

We are well acquainted with the Renaissance artists Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. These figures were integral to the Renaissance movement in Italy. Take a look at Michelangelo's renowned painting of the Creation of Adam in the Sistine Chapel.



It is a masterpiece and is regarded as a tribute to human greatness. In this artwork, two central figures dominate the scene: God and Adam. It depicts the biblical narrative of Adam's creation. Likewise, the literary works of William Shakespeare are also remarkable during this period. Hence, the influence of Renaissance thinking permeated various domains, encompassing literature, philosophy, art, and painting.

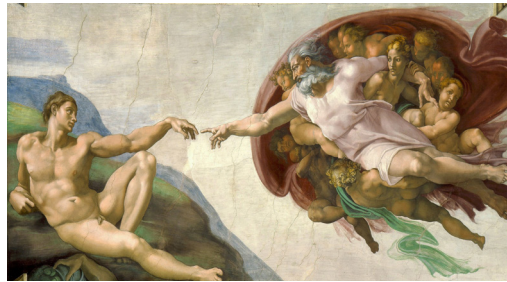


Fig 1 : The Creation of Adam by Michelangelo

Source: m.museivaticani.va

♦ Renaissance means rebirth

♦ Began in Italy-14th century

♦ To bring new orientation to history

♦ Humanistic view.

♦ Human actions is not connected to God

The term 'Renaissance' means 'rebirth' and is generally applied to the series of cultural changes in Italy in the 14th century. It was considered a period when Europeans were rediscovering their culture and arts. It was considered humanistic because it opposed the medieval understanding of man.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, European historians sought to bring a new orientation to historical studies. They focused on the humanistic view of history. Collingwood suggests that history became the history of human passions during the Renaissance period. This change in the thoughts of Western man is denoted by the term 'Humanism'. Human actions were no longer seen as attached to a divine plan during this period. Historical thought became central to the picture. According to E. H. Carr, the Renaissance restored the classical view of the world and the primacy of reason.

Let us have a look at the works of famous Renaissance historians.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)

Machiavelli was the son of a Florentine judge. In his education, he studied the Latin classics and Italian writers. The writings of Polybius influenced him. During the year of the French invasion (1494), he received a position in a government office related to war and foreign embassies. In 1498, he was promoted to the rank of Second Chancellor by

♦ *Machiavelli's Major work: The Prince*

♦ *Gave picture of government, political and diplomacy in Italy of 1500.*

♦ *Other prominent work: The History of Florence*

♦ *Will Durant critiqued Machiavelli for inaccurate account*

♦ *Machiavelli is interested in tracing the cause and effect of an event*

♦ *The History of Florence*

the Grand Council. Later, he was appointed as Secretary to the Council of Ten and held the position for fifteen years. In 1513, he began to compose the work "The Prince." However, the work was published in 1532. "The Prince" was intended to give Italy an accurate picture of government, politics, and diplomacy in 1500. Later, this work became a manual for princes, but it was not written with that intent.

In 1516, he published "Discorsi" (Discourse on the First Ten Books of Livy). "The History of Florence" was written at the request of Clement VII and was published in 1525. According to J.W. Thompson, this work is a caustic history of Florence. The work traces the history from the decline of Rome and depicts the political details up to 1492. Will Durant critiqued Machiavelli's work on the grounds of an inaccurate account, plagiarized content from other historians, showing more interest in the conflict of factions than the development of institutions, and finally, ignoring cultural history.

However, Machiavelli presents some noteworthy contributions to history. As a historian, Machiavelli is interested in tracing the cause and effect of an event. He gave a precise analysis of Florence's families, classes, and interests. Other works include "The Art of War" and "Life of Castruccio Castracani."

Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540)

Guicciardini was a native of Florence, born on 6th March 1482. He studied law at the University of Padua. Upon completing his studies, he worked as a Professor of Law in Florence. In 1513, he embarked on his diplomatic career as an envoy to the court of Emperor Ferdinand. At the age of twenty-seven, he penned the History of Florence. The work encompasses the history of Florence from 1378 to 1509. J. W. Thompson highlights the praiseworthy aspects of the work, which include the clarity and precision of the narrative, a keen sense of affairs and the play of emotions, a penetrating analysis of characters and ambitions, and an explicit judgment of the actions of the princes, leaders, and masses.

The History of Italy, written in Italian, stands as his magnum opus. The book is divided into twenty volumes. It commences with the period of Charles VII in Italy in 1494 and concludes with the demise of Pope Clement VII and the election of Pope Paul III in 1534. J. W. Thompson asserts that Guicciardini's purpose in writing the History of Italy was didactic and pragmatic. According to Herbert Butterfield,



♦ *The History of Italy*

♦ *French Renaissance historian.*

♦ *Geographical factors are important.*

the History of Italy “represented the most impressive Renaissance achievement in this genre of literature”.

Jean Bodin (1530-1596)

Jean Bodin was a French Renaissance historian who wrote “The Method for the Easy Comprehension of History.” In this work, he believed that the study of history was the foundation of wisdom. Bodin outlined a philosophy of history that revolved around geographical factors. He argued that temperature, rainfall, soil, and topography determine the course of history. These factors shape human character and historical events.

1.2.1.1 Impact of Renaissance on Historiography

Scholars regarded the rise of the Renaissance spirit as an endeavour to re-embrace the humanistic perspective of history, renewed fascination in the past, advancements in historical criticism, and the proliferation of humanistic historians such as Machiavelli and Guicciardini.

A comprehensive analysis of these characteristics is outlined below.

♦ *Return to humanistic view of history*

♦ *Emergence of lay historians*

♦ *Establishment of science of archaeology*

♦ *Historical criticism*

♦ *New political consciousness*

- i. The Renaissance period prompted a revival of the Humanistic perspective of history. This implies that historical thinking was centered on men, and there was diminished emphasis on the divine intervention of Gods.
- ii. The period witnessed the emergence of lay historians. The theological interpretation of history and the intervention of supernatural elements in historiography eventually disappeared when men ceased to believe in providential plans in their actions. This led to lay historians who displayed an interest in local issues.
- iii. Renaissance historiography resulted in the establishment of the Science of Archaeology, which generated an interest in archaeological remnants. The historians of the fifteenth century brought attention to the significance of archaeological remnants in historical writing. This sparked a keenness for “antiquities.”
- iv. Another impact of the period was the advancement of historical criticism.

- v. Humanistic historiography fostered a fresh political awareness.

1.2.1.2 Scientific Revolution

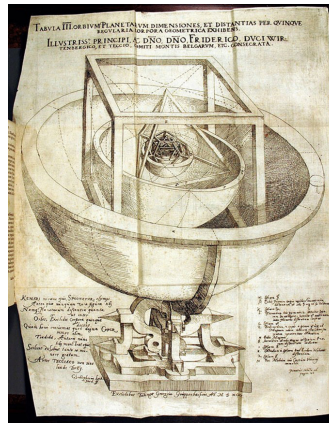


Fig 2: Illustration from Kepler's 1596 *Mysterium cosmographicum*, a geometrical archetype of the solar system

Source: [springer.com](https://www.springer.com)

♦ *Scientific revolution helped the Enlightenment.*

♦ *Rejected supernatural explanation.*

♦ *The writings of Francis Bacon and Descartes had skeptical influences*

During the seventeenth century, there was a fundamental change in humanity's conception of the universe. The increase in scientific knowledge provided a foundation for the Enlightenment to flourish. Copernicus initiated the scientific revolution with his work, "The Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies" (1543), in which he advocated the heliocentric theory, stating that the sun was the center of the universe. This theory gained prominence when Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) proposed the laws of planetary motion. The contributions of Galileo and Isaac Newton further accelerated the spread of the scientific revolution, bringing it to its zenith.

The scientists' approach influenced philosophers to engage with mathematics and physics. The skeptical attitude that characterized the Renaissance period evolved into a rejection of supernatural explanations. Nevertheless, the writings of Francis Bacon and Descartes, who were regarded as men of science, had skeptical influences.

Rene Descartes (1596-1650)

Rene Descartes was both a scientist and a philosopher. In 1637, he published "The Discourse on Method," which significantly influenced the development of modern

philosophy. Descartes employed the method of 'methodical doubt' as his approach to inquiry. This method involves doubting the existence of everything universally, known as "de omnibus dubitandum."

According to Collingwood, Descartes made distinctions between poetry, history, philosophy, and divinity. He argued that the knowledge envisioned by Descartes had no relevance to historical thought, as Descartes did not consider history to be a field of knowledge. In this perspective, Descartes puts forth four points regarding history.

♦ *Rene Descartes employed 'methodical doubt' as method.*

♦ *Did not consider history as branch of knowledge.*

♦ *Four arguments of Descartes on history.*

- i. **Historical escapism:** The historian is seen as a voyager who grew distant from his era.
- ii. **Historical pyrrhonism:** Historical narratives are unreliable records of bygone times.
- iii. **The anti-utilitarian concept of history:** This implies that unreliable narratives are inadequate for comprehending the past.
- iv. He regarded history as an exercise in fantasy construction.

Cartesian Historiography

Descartes's skepticism of history did not discourage historians. Instead, historians took this as a challenge to rework their methods and demonstrate that critical history was feasible. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, a novel school of historical thought arose, referred to as Cartesian historiography by Collingwood. It was named Cartesian due to its foundation in systematic skepticism and acknowledgment of critical principles. The primary concept of this school was that testimonies recorded by authorities should not be unquestioningly accepted. Instead, they should be critically scrutinized according to three methodological rules. These rules comprise:

♦ *It was named Cartesian due to its foundation in systematic skepticism and acknowledgment of critical principles*

- i. Descartes understood the rule that no authority must influence us to believe what we know cannot have happened.
- ii. Various authorities must both oppose and harmonize.
- iii. Written authorities should be cross-checked by non-literary evidence.

♦ *Critiques of Descartes said critical history was possible.*

♦ *Collingwood calls it Cartesian historiography.*

Scholars viewed the general tendency of the Cartesian school as anti-historical. In the eighteenth century, Vico launched a powerful attack on the Cartesian theory of philosophy. This criticism resulted in the general discrediting

and downfall of the school.

1.2.2 Enlightenment Historiography



Fig 3: *The Sleep of Reason produces monster* by Francisco Goya

Source: metmuseum.org

♦ *The era of rationality marked the commencement of logical thinking in humanity*

Goya, a Spanish painter from the 18th century, expressed his allegiance to the Enlightenment through his artworks. The viewers of his painting, “The Sleep of Reason,” interpret it as Goya’s representation of himself in a state of slumber while he sketches, depicting his diminished rationality and the presence of owls symbolizing darkness or malevolence. His intention was to convey that in the absence of reason, wickedness and corruption would prevail. This image exemplifies the significance of reason in shaping intellectual thought. The era of rationality marked the commencement of logical thinking in humanity, fueled by scientific knowledge.

Meaning

The Enlightenment, also known as the “Age of Reason,” emerged in the aftermath of the Scientific Revolution. Scholars regarded this period as witnessing the rise of the “intellectual revolution,” which emphasized the significance of reason and science in all fields of study concerning mankind. Thus, the Scientific Revolution, faith in reason, and the intellectual revolution defined the Enlightenment. *The Dictionary of History of Ideas* defines the Enlightenment as a self-aware and highly articulated movement, presenting shared fundamental concepts, methodological approaches, and reforms based on commonly held values. The

♦ *Age of Reason or ‘Intellectual revolution’*

♦ *Rational thought, liberty, progress and fraternity.*



German philosopher Immanuel Kant proclaimed that “the Enlightenment is the emancipation of man from his self-incurred minority.”

◆ *Collingwood said, it is a revolt against power of religion.*

The Enlightenment focused on the application of rational thought, discussions on liberty, progress, and fraternity. The involvement of God was rejected, and everything was examined in a rational and scientific manner. According to Collingwood, the Enlightenment was a prominent characteristic of the eighteenth century, aiming to secularize all aspects of human life and thought. It was seen as a rebellion against the authority of institutional religion. Originating in England, it began as a reform of intellectual and moral ideas. Scholars regarded the Enlightenment as a European movement, remaining primarily confined to the English-speaking world while being perceived as a utopia in other parts of Europe.

Influence of Enlightenment Historiography

- i. The Enlightenment was a rebellion against religion. According to the Enlightenment thinkers, the absence of positive values in religion was a complete mistake, and it was a creation of a deceitful, hypocritical group known as the clergy.
- ii. Enlightenment historiography opposed Church historiography, aiming for secularization. During this era, history began to be perceived as the account of human actions, rather than a predetermined enactment of a divine plan. The works of Voltaire, Hume, Montesquieu, and Gibbon reflected these transformations.
- iii. The Enlightenment emphasises the necessity of history. It witnessed the emergence of the notion that the investigation of history is a natural and unavoidable aspect of human activity.
- iv. The progress of science motivated Enlightenment thinkers to formulate general rules for the development of human societies.

◆ *Against Church historiography.*

◆ *Progress of science*

◆ *Stress the need for history*

1.2.2.1 Major Forerunners of the Enlightenment

The pivotal precursors of the movement were Descartes, Leibniz, and Newton in terms of methodology. Francis Bacon and Locke were significant for their contributions to substantive philosophy and the empirical approach. Bodin and Hobbes were noteworthy for their political

◆ *Bacon and Descartes, Newton and Locke were regarded as forerunners of the Enlightenment period*

thought. Bacon and Descartes, Newton and Locke were regarded as forerunners of the Enlightenment period. These individuals laid the foundation for the emergence of new philosophical thinking. Other renowned philosophers and thinkers included Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, Voltaire, David Hume, Edward Gibbon, Montesquieu, Turgot, and Rousseau.

Montesquieu (1689-1755)

◆ *The Considerations says disintegration follows after the development*

Montesquieu was a French nobleman, judge, historian, and political philosopher. He is renowned for his works *Considerations on the Causes of the Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans* and *The Spirit of Law*. In *Considerations*, Montesquieu examines the rise and fall of Roman civilization. Through this work, he seeks to depict one of the inevitable aspects of history: the disintegration that ensues after the development of civilization and the state. In this work, perhaps for the first time, the concept of historical causation is introduced. He posits that moral and physical causes govern the preservation and decline of monarchies.

◆ *Causation of history is mentioned*

◆ *Spirit of Law: relationship between physical force and social forms*

Montesquieu's most significant work is *The Spirit of Law*, which was published in 1748. It is an essay exploring the relationship between physical force and social structures, as well as the interconnectedness of various elements of civilization. He attempts to establish the concept of "scientific sociology" in this work. He asserts that climate is the primary and most influential factor in determining the economy, law, and national character. According to Montesquieu, custom is the most effective form of law as it is shaped by climate.

◆ *Concept of 'scientific sociology'*

◆ *Human Laws lead to war*

Montesquieu posits that in the state of nature, individuals experience fear and avoid violence and war. The need for sustenance leads people to form associations and live in societies. Montesquieu writes, "...As soon as man enters into a state of society, he loses the sense of his weakness, equality ceases, and the state of war commences...". He argues that human laws and government arise as a product of the conflicts and wars between individuals and nations.

◆ *Man in the state of nature tries his best to avoid war.*

◆ *Voltaire argued against absolute monarchy and endorsed the English system of governance.*

He further states that the primary purpose of government is to maintain law and order, uphold political liberty, and secure individuals' property. He opposes absolute monarchy and favors the English system as the best form of government. He concludes that the ideal form of government is one in which the legislative, executive, and judicial powers are separated and hold each other in check to prevent any



branch from becoming too powerful.

♦ *Voltaire criticised it as an exaggeration of the influence of climate in history*

However, the book received criticism from various thinkers and historians. Voltaire insisted that Montesquieu had exaggerated the influence of climate on history. According to Collingwood, while Montesquieu distinguished between nations and cultures, he misunderstood the nature of these differences by envisioning them solely in terms of climate and geography.

Voltaire (1694-1778)

♦ *"All history, in short, is little less than a collection of crimes, follies and misfortunes".*

François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire was one of the notable scholars of the Enlightenment era. He was a poet, dramatist, novelist, essayist, political thinker, historian, and philosopher. Voltaire proclaimed that we could not securely establish historical knowledge for events earlier than the fifteenth century. Voltaire remarked, "All history, in short, is little less than a collection of crimes, follies, and misfortunes." Will Durant remarked, "...Italy had a Renaissance, and Germany had a Reformation, but France had a Voltaire. He was for his country both the Renaissance and the Reformation and half the Revolution...".

♦ *Voltaire's works broke all traditional narration*

♦ *Dealt with universal history in a philosophical manner.*

Voltaire is credited with historical works like The History of Charles XII, The Age of Louis XIV, The New History: Essays on the Morals and Character of the Nations from Charlemagne to Louis XIII. Voltaire's two masterpiece works, Age of Louis and the Essay, deal with universal history philosophically. He broke all conventional notions of narrating military history and focused on customs, social history, and achievements in arts and sciences. The Essay traces the progress of civilizations worldwide in a universal context, neglecting both nationalism and Christian influence. He was the first scholar to emphasize Europe's debt to Middle Eastern civilization's science, medicine, and philosophy. In his 'Recapitulation,' Voltaire concluded that "All history is little less than a long succession of useless cruelties, a collection of crimes, follies, and misfortunes."

Philosophy of History

The term 'philosophy of history' was coined by Voltaire in the eighteenth century. It represents not merely critical or scientific history, but rather a mode of historical thought in which the historian transcends the reiteration of received narratives. For Voltaire, philosophy signifies independent

♦ *philosophy signifies independent and critical thinking*

and critical thinking. The expression philosophy of history was subsequently employed by Hegel, an eighteenth-century philosopher, and thinkers of the Positivist school. Their understanding of 'philosophy' differs from Voltaire's. To Hegel, it denoted contemplation of the world in its entirety, whereas positivists regarded it as the unveiling of a universal law.

♦ *Human nature undergoes distinct modifications and exceptional individuals shape the course of history*

His major conclusions were:

- i. Human nature undergoes distinct modifications due to climate, government, religion, and customs.
- ii. Chance and accidents exert significant influence in shaping events.
- iii. Exceptional individuals with genius shape the course of history.

1.2.3 David Hume, Edward Gibbon and Vico-Herder

1.2.3.1 David Hume (1711-1777)

Born on 26th April 1711, David Hume received his education at the University of Edinburgh between 1722 and 1725. During his early years, he pursued moral philosophy, becoming renowned for his philosophical empiricism and scepticism. He emerged as a prominent figure among the Edinburgh 'literati' during the Scottish Enlightenment. His notable work includes the *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739), which marked his initial endeavor to construct a comprehensive philosophical system. This work is divided into three books. The first book explores the origin of ideas, space and time, the nature of causality, and sceptical inferences derived from those theories. The second book delves into the psychological mechanisms that elucidate the emotional aspects of human beings. The third book addresses morals and moral goodness.

♦ *Scottish enlightenment thinker who wrote the Treatise on Human Nature*

Hume authored essays on historical and political matters, publishing them between 1741 and 1758. His significant historical work comprised *The History of England* (1754-62), encompassing eight volumes. The initial volume of the book covers the period from 1603 to 1649. The latter portion of the work focuses on history up to 1688, with two volumes dedicated to the sixteenth century and two volumes examining the period from Julius Caesar to Henry



◆ *History of England discussed the historical and political issues in England*

VII. He derided the practice of research as mere collection of uninteresting facts, asserting that the true task of the historian is the systematic and methodical understanding of the lessons history imparts to humanity. According to Hume, human society originated from a 'social contract.' In his essay *Of the Study of History*, Hume referred to the subject as "an enjoyable pastime."

◆ *History is not merely a collection of facts*

◆ *Hume was influenced by the scientific method*

◆ *Stated that we can only observe nature*

Hume's historical writings were deeply influenced by his moral philosophy. He emphasized that customs, rather than reason, tend to shape individual behavior. Hume was among the Scottish historians who methodically and comparatively studied human societies, aiming to trace the progression from barbarism to refinement. He perceived philosophy as an inductive and experimental science of human nature, drawing inspiration from the scientific methodologies of Isaac Newton and John Locke. His objective was to derive general insights into the workings of the human mind in acquiring knowledge. To elucidate this, he posited that our understanding relies solely on systematic laws. Hume asserted that comprehending nature is beyond our reach; we can merely observe how things behave and codify that behavior. Consequently, he contended that no theory of reality is feasible, and knowledge is confined to our experiential realm.

◆ *The works of the French Enlightenment eroded his belief in Christianity*

1.2.3.2 Edward Gibbon (1737- 1794)

Edward Gibbon was born in 1737 in Surrey, United Kingdom. He attended Magdalen College, Oxford. However, he later converted to Catholicism, and the works of the French Enlightenment eroded his belief in Christianity as a whole. His encounters with Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Hume further immersed him in the Enlightenment movement.

The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire by Gibbon

◆ *Christianity ended up shattering faith in the state*

The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire is his major work comprising six volumes. The first volume was published in 1776. Gibbon traces the decline of the empire from the accession of Commodus (180 CE). He argues that the decline of the Roman Empire began with the rise of Christianity, which shattered people's faith in the official religion and thereby disrupted the state. Gradually, they formed an *imperium in imperio*, a sovereign within a government.

♦ *There are three levels of social change*

♦ *History is the exhibition of human wisdom.*

In the second and third volumes, Gibbon interprets the conversion of Constantine as an act of statesmanship. The fourth volume focuses on Justinian, Belisarius, and Roman law. In volume V, Gibbon traces the rise of Muhammad and the Arab conquest of the Eastern Roman Empire. Volume VI covers the Crusades and the capture of Constantinople by Mohammed II. Throughout this work, he illustrates three levels of social change: technological improvement, the legal-political-economic infrastructure, and representative achievements and culture. He argues that visible changes occurred in the first level throughout the period. Collingwood viewed Gibbon's conception of history as anything but an exhibition of human wisdom. Gibbon finds that the motive force of history is human irrationality itself, and he refers to his narrative as a "triumph of barbarism and religion." He places the beginning of his historical narrative in a "golden age of human reason," the Antonine period. The conception of the golden age gives Gibbon a special place among Enlightenment historians.

Gibbon as a Historian

♦ *No design in history and events are guided by cause*

"The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" by Gibbon is a remarkable work of nationalist and philosophical historiography. Gibbon argued that a historian in the Age of Enlightenment must possess some knowledge of philosophy and criticism. Durant noted that Gibbon occasionally acknowledged the existence of progress. According to him, history lacks a predetermined plan; events are seen as the result of unguided factors. Nevertheless, Gibbon ultimately concludes that human nature appears to remain constant.

♦ *History is influenced by climate, not race.*

Gibbon approached history with philosophical reflections. Rather than restricting history to laws or formulating a specific 'philosophy of history,' Gibbon expressed certain viewpoints regarding history:

- i. He stated that climate influenced the initial phases of civilisation.
- ii. He dismisses race as a decisive factor.
- iii. He acknowledged the influence of outstanding individuals.

1.2.3.3 Giambattista Vico (1668-1744)

Vico was born on June 23, 1668, to a poor bookseller in Naples. Due to his dissatisfaction with the dry teachings of Jesuit scholasticism, Vico was primarily self-taught. Scholasticism, a medieval school of philosophy, focused on



♦ *Vico formulated the anti-Cartesian argument*

theology and philosophy influenced by Aristotle's logic and writings. Consequently, he had to forgo attending classes. He pursued his formal education at the University of Naples and successfully graduated in 1694. Vico, an Italian philosopher, rhetorician, historian, and jurist of the Italian Enlightenment, gained renown for his non-Cartesian approach to history.

Anti-Cartesian Philosophy of Vico

We have previously discussed the principles of Cartesians in the preceding session. Within this framework, the testimonies of the authorities were accepted without undergoing critical examination. At the onset of the eighteenth century, thinkers such as Vico, Locke, and David Hume endeavored to deconstruct this philosophy, consequently earning the label of anti-Cartesians. Among these thinkers, Vico emerged as a prominent figure in this philosophy. By means of *Scienza nuova*, Vico challenged the skeptical knowledge of Descartes and posited that historical knowledge should be founded on the principle of *verum-factum convertuntur*. This principle was formulated in 1710 and asserts that truth is ascertained through creation, not through the observation of Descartes. In accordance with this principle, history is embraced as an object of human knowledge due to the fact that language, custom, law, and government shape mankind. For Vico, history is not solely concerned with the past, but rather with the current societal structure in which we all reside, encompassing the manners and customs that we collectively share.

♦ *Vico challenged Cartesian principles and said that truth should be verified by creation.*

Vico and his Ideas

1. Vico's major work, *Scienza nuova* (1725), presented the "principles of a new science concerning the nature of nations" and aimed to discover the consistencies in history that elucidate the past, present, and future.
2. Durand argued that Vico endeavored to incorporate the history of language, literature, law, and government into a threefold framework. During the initial phase, individuals communicated via signs and gestures. In the second phase, they communicated through symbols, similarities, and images, and in the third phase, through words mutually agreed upon by the people.

♦ *New science-Uniformities in History*

♦ *Threefold stages of history - Language, History and Law*

♦ *Governments go through three stages- theocratic, aristocratic and democratic*

He further states that the government goes through three stages: the theocratic, aristocratic, and democratic. In the first stage, rulers claimed themselves as the voice of God, while in the second, civil rights were restricted to the orders of the ruling class. In the final stage, all humans were considered equal before the law. He referred to this progression as “theocracy, aristocracy, democracy, and monarchy.” In this regard, Vico agreed with Plato and said that “democracy tends towards chaos, and autocratic rule is the necessary remedy for democratic disorders, and monarchies are the ultimate form of government in which nations find stability.”

Collingwood outlined Vico’s idea of history as follows:

♦ *Certain periods in history have a general character*
♦ *Similar periods reappear in the same order*
♦ *History is a circular repetition*

- i. Vico asserted that certain periods in history possessed a general character. Occasionally, two periods might exhibit a similar character. For instance, there exists a general resemblance between the Greek and European Middle Ages’ Homeric period. He referred to such periods as “heroic periods.”
- ii. Vico demonstrated that analogous periods tended to recur in the same sequence. He explained that every heroic period is succeeded by a classical period, followed by a decline into a new form of barbarism. He referred to this new barbarism as the “barbarism of reflection,” where thinking has exhausted its creative potential and engenders insignificant artificial and pedantic distinctions.
- iii. Vico proclaimed that history is a circular repetition. The movements of periods are not cyclical but rather spiral. He elucidated that history never repeats itself, but each new phase differs from the previous one. For example, the Christian barbarism of the Middle Ages differs from the pagan barbarism of the Homeric age.

Vico listed several prejudices that historians are prone to commit. These include:

- a. Opinions regarding antiquity, that is, the tendency to exaggerate the power and grandeur of rulers, are a source of pride for nations. When nations reflect upon their past, they often exhibit a bias towards highlighting their achievements in



all fields.

- b. Similarly, scholars and intellectuals can succumb to a sense of pride when studying history, assuming that the people of the past were like themselves—learned individuals with reflective intellects.
- c. Another prejudiced view is the fallacy of sources, referred to as the 'scholastic succession of nations'. Historians commit this error when they assume that if two nations share a similar idea, one must have learned it from the other.
- d. Additionally, there is a prejudice in thinking that the ancients were better informed than we are.

♦ *Historians commit a number of prejudices including those based on biases*

Collingwood observes that Vico accomplished two tasks. First, he fully utilized the critical method and extended the process by demonstrating how historical thinking can be both constructive and critical. He achieved this by emancipating himself from reliance on written authorities, thereby rendering his narrative original and self-reliant, while also employing scientific analysis of truth. Second, he formulated philosophical principles that challenged Cartesian philosophy.

♦ *Vico used the critical method to counterattack Cartesians*

1.2.3.4 Johann Gottfried Herder (1744- 1803)

Johann Gottfried Herder was a German philosopher, theologian, poet, and literary critic. He was born on August 25, 1744, to a poor schoolmaster. He is the precursor of the Romantic movement in Germany. The *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, published in 1772, rejected the notion that language was the creation of God; it is a creation of man. Herder's ideas on history are contained in his works *One More Philosophy of History*, published in 1774, and *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, published between 1784 and 1791. The *One More Philosophy of History* presented history as "the natural philosophy of successive events." All history has its birth, youth, maturity, decline, and death. He conceived the Middle Ages as the "age of imagination and feelings, of poetry and art, rural simplicity, and peace." He criticized the Enlightenment as the "idolatry of reason."

♦ *Herder was the forerunner of romantic movement in Germany*

♦ *All history has birth, youth, maturity and decline.*

Herder's Philosophy of History

i. Man is the evolutionary product of nature

Herder's perspective on nature is teleological. This implies that all entities possess goals or causes. He believes that each phase of evolution was orchestrated by nature to pave the way for the subsequent phase. There is no end in and of itself. Nevertheless, as man is an end, the process reaches its peak with him. Nature brought forth man as a rational and social being. Hence, he emphasizes that man is a connection between two realms: the natural realm and the spiritual realm.

◆ *Each stage of evolution was decided by nature to prepare for the next*

ii. The racial division of mankind

The next stage in the evolution of humans was the division into different races. Each race is closely linked to its geographical environment, which shaped its physical and mental traits. Once a race is formed, it possesses permanent mental and physical characteristics.

◆ *Man was divided into races based on geographical classicifications*

iii. Historical organism

In a racially differentiated humanity, a superior type of human organism emerges, known as the historical organism. It represents a race that has evolved into higher forms instead of remaining stagnant over time. From this standpoint, life in Europe is deemed historical, whereas life in China or India lacks an actual historical process.

◆ *Historical Organism is the highest form*

iv. National culture and national character

The philosophy of history of Herder led to the emergence of a new school of thought known as Romanticism and laid the foundation for cultural nationalism. The Romantic movement was rooted in emotions and sentiments. Hence, Herder's concept of national culture and national character is deeply rooted in Romanticism. Herder asserted that genuine cultures originate from the native roots, that is, the people or volks, rather than from the lifestyles of the upper classes.

◆ *Evolution of romanticism led to cultural nationalism*

The national character of such a refined civilization is referred to as *volksgeist*. Each national culture possesses its own distinctiveness in terms of language, religion, morals, literature, and artistic expressions. Thus, Herder argues that it is the national culture that molds the national character. Each national culture needs to be examined as a distinct entity, devoid of moral judgments, as each culture belongs to a different time and environment.

◆ *National culture and character became important*



Summarised Overview

In this unit, we learn about how the concept of humanism ushered in an era of moderation in historiography. It replaced religion as the centre of history writing with humans as the focus. The Renaissance brought about major changes in art, literature, etc., and it also influenced historical writing. Writers like Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and Jean Bodin are testimony to the changes in historical method after the Renaissance.

René Descartes's methodology placed methodical doubt and systematic scepticism as the main concepts to follow in history writing. The Enlightenment was brought about by the influence of the scientific revolution that happened with a general focus on reason as the main factor in critical thinking during the period. The Enlightenment is considered to have rejected church historiography and thus earned the name 'Age of Reason'. Important enlightenment historians include Montesquieu and Voltaire. Then the historiography was again revised by the emergence of Edward Gibbon, known for his phenomenal work on the Roman Empire, and later Vico and Herder enriched the tradition of history writing as well.

Self Assessment

1. What was the impact of the Renaissance on historiography?
2. Describe the difference between Renaissance and Enlightenment.
3. What was the skeptic character of the Renaissance?
4. Write a note on cartesian and anti-cartesian philosophy.
5. What were the major views of Descartes on history?
6. What was the influence of Enlightenment historiography?
7. Describe the principle of *verum-factum convertuntur* of Vico.

Assignments

1. Describe the contributions of Machiavelli as a Renaissance thinker.
2. Assess the impact of the Renaissance on Europe
3. Critically reflect on the work of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Law*.
4. Explain the reasons for the emergence of Renaissance.

Suggested Readings

1. Benedetto Croce, *History Its Theory and Practice*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1921.
2. E. H Carr, *What is History?* New York, 1961.

References

1. James Westfall Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, Volume I and II.
2. John Cannon (ed.), *Blackwell Dictionary of the Historians*, 1988.
3. Philip P Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, 1973.
4. R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1946.
5. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, 11 volumes, Simon & Schuster, 1935-1975.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Positivism and Responses

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the contributions of Auguste Comte, Ranke and romanticists thinkers
- ◆ learn the importance of the scientific approach in writing history
- ◆ be acquainted with Rankean notion of historical thought and methods
- ◆ understand the difference between Positivism and Romanticism

Background

We have witnessed significant developments in political ideologies and the perception of mankind towards history, nature, and the world view since the fourteenth century. From the Renaissance to Romanticism, we have observed notable changes in historical methods and ideas. By the early nineteenth century, advancements in natural science inspired thinkers to apply scientific methods to various fields of study. Thinkers such as Henri de Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte, and Ranke employed this scientific approach to history, aiming to create a valid and objective account of the past. Romanticism emerged as a part of the counter-Enlightenment movement, characterized by progressive values and thoughts.

Keywords

Positivism, The law of three stages, Objectivity, Facts, Primary sources, Romanticism, Social Contract, Theory of General Will, Nationalism.

Discussion

1.3.1 Auguste Comte

E. Sreedharan argued that the origin of positivism could be traced back to the ideologies of Francis Bacon. It is known that Enlightenment thinkers such as Hume and Montesquieu attempted to construct a Newtonian “science



♦ *Positivism based on scientific enquiry.*

♦ *Traced back to the ideologies of Francis Bacon*

of society". Therefore, positivist philosophy, which emerged in the eighteenth century, is based on scientific inquiry similar to natural science. Consequently, philosophers believed that the seventeenth-century scientific revolution was a necessary condition that fostered the growth of positivism. Scholars consider positivism to have emerged as a reaction against Romanticism.

♦ *Word coined by Auguste Comte in 1820*

The term "positivism" was coined by Auguste Comte in 1820. Will Durant describes positivism as an intellectual characteristic of Auguste Comte, which is as old as the Platonic tradition in philosophy. Collingwood explained positivism as "...philosophy serving natural science, just as philosophy served theology in the Middle Ages...". According to the Blackwell Dictionary of Historians, positivism is defined as the "belief that the methods of natural sciences provide the principal means to attain true knowledge".

♦ *Aim to create 'social physics' or social sciences.*

♦ *Two important things: ascertaining facts and framing laws*

Positivists preached and practiced the application of natural science methods to social problems in order to create "social physics" or social sciences. However, positivists had their own understanding of "natural science". These thinkers believed it consisted of two elements: ascertaining facts and formulating laws. Facts were ascertained through sensory perception, while laws were formulated by generalizing the facts through induction. This new form of historiography came to be known as positivist historiography.

1.3.1.1 Comte and His Ideas



Auguste Comte was born in Hérault, Southern France, on 19th January 1798. He was educated at the University of Montpellier and Ecole Polytechnique in Paris. He was known as a French philosopher and advocate of positivism.

♦ *Influence from Henri de Saint-Simon.*

♦ *The historical process was identical to the natural process*

♦ *All phenomena in nature is based on natural laws*

♦ *Theological-military, metaphysical-legalistic and positive, scientific-industrial*

♦ *First stage: supernatural powers*

♦ *Second stage: transitional stage of human mind*

♦ *Third stage: maturity of human mind*

Influenced by the idea of 'positive philosophy' of a French radical, Henri de Saint-Simon, Comte developed a new social doctrine called 'positivism'. Comte maintained that historical facts should be used as raw material for something more meaningful and should be interesting. The historical process, according to positivists, was identical to the natural process. Hence, the methods of natural science were applicable to interpreting history.

Comte explains his principles of the philosophy of history in two major works: *Course of Positivist Philosophy* (1830-42, in six volumes) and the *System of Positivist Politics* (1851-54, in four volumes). Through the books, Comte tried to present his basic view. He said that all phenomena are subject to natural laws. The precise discovery of phenomena and their reduction to the smallest number is the main effort of positivist thinkers.

1.3.1.2 Law of Three Stages

He asserted that the mind undergoes three stages of development, each corresponding to a particular historical epoch. The initial stage is the theological-military (ancient) stage, followed by the metaphysical-legalistic (medieval) stage, and finally, the positive, scientific-industrial (modern) stage. According to the law, human societies and their experiences must progress through these three stages.

The first stage, known as the theological or fictitious stage, attributed events to supernatural powers. It comprises three sub-stages: animism, polytheism, and monotheism. The second stage, the metaphysical stage, represents a transitional phase of the human mind. The last stage, the positive stage, signifies the maturity of human intellect and knowledge. This stage is characterized by the pursuit of discovering natural laws. Individuals in this stage no longer seek the causes of natural phenomena. Positivists regarded this stage as scientific, employing observation, experimentation, and reasoning as their primary tools to accomplish their objectives.

Method

What was their method? Hence, positivists asserted that each natural science commences with the verification of facts and subsequently proceeds to uncover their causal impact. Embracing this assertion, Comte put forth the idea of a novel discipline known as sociology, which would embark on its



♦ *Method: first find fact and then find the causal influence*

♦ *New science called Sociology*

journey by unearthing facts and subsequently explore the causal correlations among these facts. Collingwood argues that sociologists would serve as 'super-historians,' thereby elevating history to the status of a science through scientific thinking.

1.3.2 Ranke



♦ *Father of modern scientific history*

♦ *Founding father of empirical historiography*

♦ *History should be objective*

Leopold Von Ranke (1795-1886) was a writer of narrative history. He was born in Weimar, Thuringia, Germany, to a lawyer. He was educated at Schulpforta and Leipzig University. Ranke gained fame after publishing his first work, *The Roman and Germanic Peoples*, in 1824. He was subsequently appointed as a professor of history at Berlin University until 1871. Ranke's second work focused on the Ottomans and Spain, but his archival tour led him astray, resulting in the publication of his third work, *German History, 1555-1618*. This was followed by the *History of the Popes and German History in the Age of the Reformation*. Ranke is considered the father of modern scientific history. He is also recognized as the founding father of Empirical historiography and advocated for the necessity of objectivity in history.

♦ *Ranke wrote history as it is*

According to Agatha Ramm, Ranke wrote history as it is, without attempting to prove any doctrine. He wrote about extended periods and the individuals who shaped the events. Agatha Ramm believed that Ranke demonstrated the significance of imagination in reconstructing motives behind events, the sensitivity required in character depiction, and the utilization of his dramatic sense to introduce individuals into the narrative.

1.3.2.1 Features of Rankean History

Niebuhr and Ranke believed that the sole aim of the historian is to produce scientific, objective history. Such history requires critical inquiry into historical facts. Therefore, it is opined that the historian's task was "simply to show how it was." Ranke then placed importance on political history, called *staatengeschichte*. Such narratives give prominence to political, diplomatic, legal, and constitutional history. Ranke's political ideas were conservative. In the *Historico-political Review* (1832-36), he wrote that constitutions were not the remedy and did not suit all nations. Ranke held a high place for religion in history. In Germany at the Time of the Reformation, Ranke wrote that history is religion or a close connection between them. Recognizing the role of God in the world order, Ranke thought that "history was a record of divine phenomena."

- ◆ *Ranke aimed to produce scientific, objective history*
- ◆ *Show 'how it was'*
- ◆ *Importance to political history*

Ranke sought to emphasize the role of personality in history. According to him, the determining factor of history was the actions of men. This idea is evident in the titles of his works, for example, "History of the Popes." Rankean perception of universal history is another important aspect. He argues that it is only possible to write universal history. He further states that all specialized history should reflect the larger context, from local history to the history of the whole country, the epoch, and all epochs leading to the whole world. This kind of history is termed universal history.

- ◆ *Personality is a determining factor*
- ◆ *Ranke held a high place in religion in history*

1.3.2.2 Ranke and his Methods

The period of Romanticism brought about new developments in the understanding of historical change and the writing of history. Like previous periods, the historians of this era felt the need for a critical approach and began to insist on applying greater accuracy to documents. The first attempt to implement this critical approach to the theory and practice of writing history was made by Barthold Georg Niebuhr, a Danish-German historian, and Ranke.

Ranke introduced the system of writing history based on manuscripts, private letters, diplomatic dispatches, and diaries in Latin, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and English. He applied a critical approach to these sources, which had been developed by the historians of Greece and Rome, such as Niebuhr and Mommsen.

According to Gooch, Ranke was determined to understand the personality of the writer and sought to ascertain the

- ◆ *Brought critical approach to history*

- ◆ *Inaugurated the system of writing history from manuscripts and other sources.*



♦ *Determined to understand the personality of the writer.*

♦ *Explore the use of unknown sources.*

source of their information. By employing this method, Ranke discovered that Guicciardini and Machiavelli, Italian Renaissance historians, had copied from other books and misinterpreted significant facts. Ranke declared that the purpose of his scientific journey was to uncover and utilize unknown sources for the history of modern states, particularly in Southern Europe.

Contributions of Ranke in Historical Writing

- i. Emphasis on primary sources: Ranke insisted that historical writing should be based on primary sources.
- ii. Understanding the past: Ranke utilized primary sources to comprehend the past in its own context. Consequently, Ranke initiated the tradition of objectivity in historiography. He stated that the strict presentation of facts is the paramount law of history. The historian's objective is to narrate what has occurred.
- iii. Use of scholarly apparatus: Ranke urged historians to employ methods such as referencing, bibliography, footnotes, etc., to identify the sources they utilized. Thus, Ranke emphasized the significance of investigative methods, which would prove advantageous to the reader.
- iv. Publication of primary sources: The critical examination of primary sources will lead to the publication of volumes containing manuscripts, charts, memoirs, letters, etc.
- v. Establishment of the 'Historical Journal': The emergence of scientific history prompted the establishment of *Historische Zeitschrift*, the first historical journal.

♦ *Primary sources to understand past*

♦ *Initiated objectivity in history*

♦ *Relevance of historical methods*

♦ *Established historical journal*

1.3.3 Romanticism

One name is highly popular among thinkers, musicians, artists, and historians of the Romantic Age: the English Romantic poet, William Wordsworth. His poems are renowned for connecting human relationships to nature and employing typical speech patterns. His genre of 'romantic poetry' showcases a profound adoration for nature. Therefore, the era of Romanticism altered the perception of mankind, influenced by irrational ideas, reverence for nature, and the celebration of ordinary individuals, among other aspects. Wordsworth's name serves as an illustrative example, although there are other notable figures like Herder

♦ *Romanticism emerged as a reaction to Enlightenment.*

and Hegel. The painting titled “The Morning” by Philipp Otto Runge exemplifies the essence of early Romanticism.



Fig 4: *The Small Morning* by Philipp Otto Runge, represents early Romanticism

Source: commons.wikimedia.org

1.3.3.1 Meaning and Origin of Romanticism

The 18th century marked the prominence of the rationalistic concept of history through Enlightenment thinkers. This resulted in protests among other intellectuals who reacted against the assumptions of Enlightenment philosophy that faith and belief must surrender to reason. Romanticism was the intellectual movement of Europe in the 19th century. The hints of Romanticism first emerged in France, England, Italy, and Spain. However, the new spirit of this movement was first achieved and organized in England. We can say that Romanticism was an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement initiated in Europe at the end of the 18th century. In contrast to Enlightenment, Romanticist thinkers looked upon life based on feelings. Hence, they placed human feelings at the forefront. This Age, therefore, came to be known as the “Age of feelings”.

♦ *Emerged in 19th century*

♦ *Called as Age of feelings*

♦ *Against un-historical reasoning*

J. W Thompson insisted that Romanticism was a reaction against the unhistorical reasoning of Enlightenment. It was, therefore, the protest of sentiment and imagination against intellectualism, of feeling against form of individualism against the tyranny of the system. Romanticism hence was an appeal to creative imagination.

Romanticism represents a new approach to seeing the positive value and civilizations in a different form. They

♦ Saw history as progress

saw history as progress, development of human reason, or education of mankind. They looked upon the past as felt by humanists for Greco-Roman history.

♦ Forerunner of Romanticism

♦ Age of Reason corrupted man

1.3.3.2 Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

Rousseau was a Genevan philosopher and composer. His books, *Discourse on Inequality* and *Social Contract*, reflected the very expressions of Romantic ideas and thought. His fundamental theory was based on the inherent values of the natural man. Through his *Discourse* he challenged the Age of Reason (Enlightenment) by declaring that this Age had corrupted the character of men. He said that the evils of civilization emerge from the establishment of private property.

♦ Historian should view past events to find achievements.

Rousseau explained history, though the principle applied not only to the history of the civilized world but to the history of all races. He propagated that historians must not follow the principles of Enlightenment historians. This means that historians should never regard past events with disgust but must look at the events sympathetically and try to find the human achievements.

♦ Rulers give the people what they are ready to accept.

Collingwood remarked that Rousseau was “a child of the Enlightenment, but through the interpretation of his principles, he became the father of the Romantic movement.” He envisaged that the rulers could give the people nothing but what the people are ready to accept. Rousseau replaced the idea of a general will with a despotic will. This is the idea of the social contract that he envisages.

Social Contract and Theory of General Will of Rousseau

♦ Social contract theory of Rousseau

♦ General will of the people is important

In the opening pages of the *Social Contract*, Rousseau said, “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.” Rousseau declared that there is a social contract among individuals, not to obey the rulers, but as an agreement of individuals to subordinate their judgment, rights, and powers. Each person will enter into such a contract by accepting the protection of the communal law. The sovereign power of a state is situated not in any ruler but in the general will of the community. Therefore, the law should be an expression of the general will.

He further asked the question of what is the general will? Is this the will of all citizens or only the majority's will? Furthermore, who are these citizens? In answer to all these



♦ *will of the community and of the individual members*

questions, Rousseau said that it is not the will of all nor the will of the majority. Instead, it is the will of the community and of the individual members.

♦ *Will not the violation of freedom, but for preserving it*

♦ *State forces the individual to be 'free'*

If an individual disagrees with the will, the state may force him to submit. Rousseau considers this not a violation of freedom but a preservation of it. For a civil state, it is only through the law that the individual can enjoy freedom from robbery, assault, and ills. Hence, forcing the individual to obey the rules means "forcing him to be free." We have seen that in the *Discourse*, he said that the establishment of private property is the cause of all evils in a civilization. In contrast to this, in the *Social Contract*, Rousseau allows private ownership subject to communal control. The community should take over the control of private property for the common good. By insisting on this, Rousseau tried to diminish economic inequality. He, therefore, argues that in such a contract, a man who is unequal in strength and intellect will become equal in social and legal rights.

NATIONALIST TRADITIONS



Fig 5: *Liberty Leading the People* by Eugene Delacroix
Source: [wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Liberty_Leading_the_People_-_Eugene_Delacroix.jpg)

♦ *Nationalism emerged along with Romanticism.*

The painting *Liberty Leading the People* by Eugène Delacroix embodied the Romantic view of the French Revolution of 1830. This artwork commemorated the July Revolution of 1830. The painting is significant because it represents women wearing a Phrygian cap, symbolizing the concept of liberty, and the flag representing the French Revolution, which later became the national flag of France. Scholars interpret this as a depiction of nationalistic sentiments. Some believe that the image marked the end of the Enlightenment and the beginning of the Romantic era.

One crucial aspect of Romanticism was the assertion of nationalist ideals. The philosophical background of nationalism was formed by Rousseau's emphasis on 'feelings and passion', and Herder's doctrine of the "genius of the

◆ *National culture and national character of Herder is the background*

nation,” national culture, and national character. As discussed in our previous unit, Herder argued that each national culture was unique, and national character is expressed through its language, literature, and art. According to Romanticists, this national character shaped the history of its people.

◆ *National sentiments through unity, language, geographical unity.*

Nationalist sentiments embraced the idea of unity through shared race, language, religion, geographical territory, common political aspirations, and shared historical development. Romanticists evoked a sense of nationalism by focusing on the people rather than the state, and by promoting the material and spiritual development of individuals. Therefore, the study of nineteenth-century European history aimed to explore and trace the origins of national identity.

◆ *Rousseau and Herder influenced the development of nationalism.*

Rousseau and Herder influenced the development of nationalism in distinct ways. According to Hans Kohn, the revival of classicism influenced the awakening of nationalism in the nineteenth century. Rousseau, considered the “father of modern political nationalism,” developed the concept of the general will. His ideas influenced the political nationalism of the French Revolution. As previously discussed, Rousseau believed that sovereignty and government reside not in kings, but in the people. He argued that ordinary individuals form the nation, and their consent, sanctioned by the government, determines the destiny of the nation.

◆ *Rousseau influenced British and French nationalism*

Herder’s influence on the development of nationalism in Britain and France differed. In these countries, nationalism took on a political dimension. Among Germans and Italians, Herder and other Romanticists emphasized national spirit through the use of the mother tongue, ancient folk traditions, and shared ancestry. Germans, Slavs, and Italians asserted that people speaking the same language or claiming a common ancestor should form a state.

◆ *Nationalist historiography of Germany influenced by Prussian school of historians*

The nationalist historiography of nineteenth-century Germany consisted of works by Prussian historians such as Droysen, Sybel, and Treitschke. E. Sreedharan noted that the primary goal of these Prussian historians was to instill patriotism among Germans. The nationalist historiography of Germany successfully contributed to the unification of the country by 1871.

Summarised Overview

This unit deals with the emergence of the influence of scientific and empirical methods in history and the consequent reactions to the same by another set of scholars. Auguste Comte was the founder of Positivism which wanted to elevate history to the level of science by applying natural science laws to the social sciences. He is also considered the father of sociology and called it a new science. Ranke was another historian who emerged, emphasising the need for objectivity in history. He is known as the father of empirical historiography and is focused on scientific history. He brought a critical approach to history and stressed the importance of primary sources. Romanticism emerged as an intellectual movement against the focus on intellectualism and instead focused on feelings of sentiment and imagination. Rousseau was one of the major proponents of Romanticism, and he concluded that the age of reason corrupted men. Nationalist historiography emerged with Romanticism and was influenced by Rousseau's idea of feeling and passion and Herder's doctrine of 'genius of the nation.' National sentiments were shared through the idea of unity of race, language, religion, and geographical unity, and they became stronger with nationalist historiography in the 19th century.

Self Assessment

1. Analyse the relevance of facts in historiography.
2. Analyse objectivity in historical writing.
3. Elaborate on the Law of Three Stages of Comte.
4. Elaborate on three stages of Positivism.
5. Who was Leopold Von Ranke? Discuss his views of history.
6. Discuss the major nature and features of Rousseau's General Will.

Assignments

1. "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains" Explain and examine this based on Rousseau's Social Contract and the French Revolution.
2. Use the evolution of the Indian National Movement to explain Nationalist traditions in historiography.



Suggested Readings

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Social Theories in Historiography

BLOCK-02



Hegel and Marx

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand historical development as a dialectical process
- ◆ analyse the role of economic factors in historical change
- ◆ critically examine the role of social structures

Background

George Wilhelm Hegel was the most influential philosopher of the Romantic Idealist movement. He was born in Stuttgart, Germany, as the son of a minor fiscal official. He acquired knowledge in Latin, theology, and philosophy before becoming a tutor in Berne. He was greatly influenced by Gibbon, Montesquieu, and Immanuel Kant.

In 1818, he was appointed Professor of Philosophy in Berlin, a position he held until his death in 1831. His most significant works include "The Phenomenology of Spirit," "The Science of Logic," "The Philosophy of Right and Law," and "Lectures on the Philosophy of History." In his book, "Lectures on the Philosophy of History," he put forward a highly influential philosophy that elevated history to a new level.

Karl Marx (1818–1883) was the most controversial German philosopher of history who brought about a radical change in the history of socialist thinking. He introduced a new method of inquiry, novel concepts, and several daring hypotheses to explain the rise and fall of human society. Marx was a visionary, thinker, revolutionary, moralist, romanticist, and doctrinaire whose political creed aligned with scientific investigations. He attempted to uncover the underlying unity of the historical process through the theory of dialectical materialism through his works such as *Das Kapital*.

Keywords

Idealism, Absolute spirit, Base structure and superstructure, Dialectics, Class Conflict, Bourgeoisie, Proletariat, Mode of Production.



Discussion

2.1.1 Hegel's Idealism in Historical Interpretation

♦ *Existence of matter independent of finite mind, but not of divine mind.*

♦ *World consists of mind and nature, subject and object, self and non-self*

Hegel's absolute idealism is a monistic spiritualism that posits a spiritual reality as the source and basis of everything. The world of things and spirit, which is the embodiment of this spiritual principle, is essentially identical to it, yet it possesses its own limited reality, making the unity or spiritual principle a unity in diversity rather than an abstract unity. Hegel attempted to establish a genuine connection between oneself and others by considering them as manifestations of an all-encompassing Absolute Spirit, in which finite selves exist and operate. Thought is reality, but an individual thought is only partially real. The Absolute Self or thought, which is comprehensive and coherent, represents the most complete reality. Both the finite knower and the known object are manifestations of the all-encompassing Absolute Thought, rendering them fundamentally identical. Consequently, the object is not incomprehensible to the subject. "I can perceive reality as it is because I am that reality myself." Hence, we can appreciate Hegel's famous statement that "everything that is rational is real, and whatever is real is rational." The laws of thought ultimately coincide with the laws of nature. The rationality of thought implies a corresponding rationality in nature, without which objective nature would remain incomprehensible to thought.

♦ *Hegel's objective idealism*

Hegel's objective idealism acknowledges the reality of the external world, the reality of finite consciousness, and the reality of God. It recognizes the capacity of the human mind to apprehend and comprehend the world. It grants the human mind the ability to understand the world. Hegel perceives the spirit as a living, dynamic, and concrete entity, serving as an active legislator of nature. The objective realm of knowledge is entirely independent of the individual mind (realism), but it is not independent of the mind in general or universal reason (idealism), which serves as its vehicle.

Thus, according to Hegel, the ultimate reality is the dynamic absolute mind, manifesting itself as a concrete force and self-aware mind, unfolding and sustaining the entire world of finite entities and consciousnesses. Hegel regards God as a dynamic thought process that actualizes increasingly higher ideals.



♦ *Human freedom is not absolute but limited by divine freedom*

Nevertheless, Hegel's idealism did not universally appeal to the philosophical community, despite his earnest attempts to construct a system. Hegel places excessive emphasis on the absolute spirit or universal reason, leaving little room for human freedom. His focus on the absolute mind has been misinterpreted as complete determinism. His doctrine is known as panlogism, suggesting that everything is governed by the "Absolute Spirit." This "Spirit" determines the progress of nature, the course of human history, and the life and development of individual finite spirits. Hegel underestimates the importance and significance of the human mind. Although Hegel acknowledges human freedom, he recognizes that it is not absolute but rather limited by divine freedom. Human freedom, initiative, and creativity appear to be overshadowed by divine freedom. Hegel seemingly possesses excessive knowledge regarding the absolute spirit.

2.1.1.1 Hegel on History

♦ *History embodies or objectifies the rational will*

Hegel attempted to explain history, not through its own laws, but by employing the tools of philosophy and employing concepts such as the conflict between freedom and servitude, and the manifestation of the absolute spirit throughout history. He placed significant emphasis on the state and revitalized the Aristotelian or Hellenic understanding of the state as the structured existence of culture. For him, history embodies or objectifies the rational will, which also gives rise to art, religion, and philosophy. He endeavored to reconcile the theological and rational perspectives of history through his metaphysical notion of idealism.

1. All history is the history of thought. When the ideas that lead to human actions are known, they become an intelligible part of history. The mainspring and force of the historical process is reason. History presents itself as a display of emotions, and without emotion, there is no reason or action.
2. History and nature are distinct from each other. The natural process is cyclical, while historical movements do not follow cycles. They progress in spirals, and apparent repetitions of historical phenomena are always distinguished by the acquisition of something new. Although riots, revolutions, and wars appear and

♦ *It was impossible to eliminate war*

♦ *History is a product of reason*

♦ *The historical process is a logical process*



reappear in history from time to time, they differ in terms of cause, nature, or outcome.

3. The historical process is fundamentally a logical process. History comprises actions that possess an external and an internal aspect. Externally, they are mere events, but internally, they are thoughts connected logically to one another.
4. Hegel revered the state more than other romantic idealists. He believed that true liberty consisted of submission to political society, and the individual had no rights that the state was obligated to respect. Without the state, the individual would be nothing more than an animal. He wrote: "The State is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth."
5. History is the result of an infinite and active reason. The driving forces behind historical change ultimately work towards the realization of reason's grand design.

♦ *History culminates not in a future utopia but in the actual present*

♦ *Hegel was the first to write a history of philosophy*



The historical movement, which began with Herder, reached its culmination in Hegelian philosophy and caused a stir in the nineteenth century. Some of his fundamental ideas were noteworthy, elevating history to a higher level. His process of thought serves as the foundation of positivism, wherein the notion of progress suggests that something new is created continuously. His philosophy's entire basis lies in his dialectics, and its application to historical problems yielded extraordinary results. Karl Marx extensively employed dialectics to present a materialistic philosophy of history, considering it the driving force behind human activity. Hegel believed that history culminates not in a future utopia but in the present moment itself. His emphasis on understanding the present through the lens of the past greatly influenced subsequent historical writings. In his book "An Introduction to the Philosophy of History," W. H. Walsh states, "He was one of the first to write a history of philosophy, and his work in this area had a profound impact on his successors. Furthermore, throughout his writings, he consistently acknowledges the significance of the past in comprehending the present—a perspective largely absent in the thoughts of most



eighteenth-century philosophers. Although the Hegelian school had little to no effect on the development of natural sciences in the nineteenth century, it undeniably stimulated the advancement of social studies during that period."

2.1.2 Marx's Interpretation of History

2.1.2.1 Materialistic Interpretation of History

♦ *The development of the economic structure of society is a natural process*

The theory postulates that all institutions of human society (e.g., government and religion) are the outgrowth of their economic activity. The important contention of the materialist conception of history by Marx is that the development of the economic structure of society is a natural process, which appears to be the most dominant activity of humans. The word "materialist" was used by Marx to contrast with what is supernatural, metaphysical, or speculative. He believed that a general science of human society could be worked out only by describing society in empirical terms, and he considered industry and commerce as "material" in contrast with religion and morals. Thus, the materialist conception of history is intended to be a naturalistic, empirical, and scientific account of historical events, which takes industry and economics as basic factors.

♦ *Fundamental to Marxist social theory*

As Marxism is a philosophy of history imbued with an elaborate economic theory, the first principle of Marxism is determinism, which is as solid and concrete as a granite foundation. In contrast to theological and metaphysical ideas of the past, determinism is founded on historical necessity, and Marxism has built the socialist creed on it. According to Marx, history is governed by certain laws, and the first of these laws is to determine the direction of the historical process. Hegel first conceived of process thought and directed people to look upon history as governed not by any immutable laws but as a process in which something fresh is created at every moment. Marx pursued this idea further and emphasized that economic development is fundamental to social change. He believed that the economic environment in which great political, social, and intellectual movements arose determined the course of history. He also maintained that every fundamental historical development was the result of alterations in methods of producing and exchanging goods.

2.1.2.2 Base and Superstructure

♦ *The productive forces or the materials and resources*

Karl Marx developed the two interrelated theoretical concepts known as base and superstructure. The base refers to the productive forces or the materials and resources that produce the goods that society needs. The superstructure describes all other aspects of society. The superstructure of society includes people's culture, ideology, norms, and identities. It also refers to the social institutions, the political structure, and the state or societal apparatus of government. Marx argued that the superstructure grows from the base and reflects the interests of the ruling class. As such, the superstructure justifies how the base works and defends the power of the elite. Neither the base nor the superstructure is naturally occurring or static. They are both social creations, or the aggregation of ever-evolving social interactions between humans.

♦ *Ideology determines social life*

In the German Ideology, written with Friedrich Engels, Marx offered a critique of Hegel's theory of how society works. Based on the principles of idealism, Hegel asserted that ideology determines social life and that people's thoughts shape the world around them. Given the historical shifts that production has undergone, particularly the shift from feudal to capitalist production, Hegel's theory did not satisfy Marx.

♦ *Transition to a capitalist mode of production*

♦ *The relationship between base and superstructure as dialectical*

Karl Marx believed that the transition to a capitalist mode of production had far-reaching effects on the structure of society. He claimed that it drastically reconfigures the superstructure and instead advocates a "materialistic" way of understanding history known as "historical materialism," Marx argued that this is not a neutral relationship as much depends on how the superstructure emerges from the base. The place where norms, values, beliefs, and ideologies reside, the superstructure legitimizes the base. It creates the conditions under which the relations of production appear fair and natural when, in fact, they can be unjust and can only benefit the ruling class. Marx also argued that religious ideology, which urges people to obey authority and work hard for salvation, is one way the superstructure justifies the base, as it generates an acceptance of one's conditions as they are. Marx professes the principles of historical materialism and the causal relationship between base and superstructure. However, as his theory became more complex, Marx restated the relationship between base and superstructure as dialectical, meaning that the two influence each other.



So when the base changes, the superstructure also changes; it also happens vice versa. He expected that the working class would eventually revolt because he thought that once they realized how exploited they were for the benefit of the ruling class, they would decide to change things. This would result in a significant change in the base. How are goods produced and under what conditions would they shift?

Class Conflict

The primary driving force behind history, according to Karl Marx, was the class struggle. History is the outcome of the conflict between social classes. In ancient times, there existed a struggle between masters and slaves, while in medieval times, it was between lords and serfs. In modern times, the struggle manifests as a conflict between capitalists and the proletariat. Marx believed that democracy does not provide a solution to this struggle, and it will persist until the remnants of the old social order fade away. He also introduced the concept of surplus value, which he defined as the idea that value is embodied in labor. The worker receives a wage that is typically sufficient for subsistence, and the disparity between the value he produces and the value he receives constitutes the surplus value, which accrues to the capitalist.

♦ *Struggle between masters and slaves*

The concepts of forces, relations, and modes of production are fundamental to Marxist social theory. According to Marx, the primary determinant of social phenomena is the mode of production, which consists of the productive forces and the relations of production. Productive forces encompass both the materials and the tools and techniques utilized in the production of economic goods. The relations of production are the social relations that arise within the production process, particularly between proprietors and non-proprietors of the means of production. The relations of production entail control and the ability to possess the products.

♦ *The main determinant of social phenomena*

The mode of production is an abstract and analytical concept. Within a given society, there may exist multiple modes of production simultaneously. However, it is possible to discern a dominant or determining mode of production that supersedes all other systems of production. Especially during periods of social revolution, multiple modes of production coexist within the same society. In Chapter V, Marx delineates the stages of human history in terms of four modes of production: the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the capitalist.

♦ *Four modes of production*

Asiatic Mode of Production

◆ Primitive communities

The concept of the Asian mode of production designates a specific, original mode of production. This differs from the old slave production or the feudal mode of production. It is characterized by primitive communities in which land ownership is communal. These communities are still partly organized on the basis of kinship. State power, which expresses the real or imaginary unity of these communities, controls the use of essential economic resources and directly appropriates some of the community's labor and production. This mode of production represents one of the possible forms of transition from classless to class societies. It is also perhaps the oldest form of this transition. It contains the contradiction of this transition, namely the connection of communal relations of production with newly emerging forms of the exploiting classes and the state. The concept of the Asian mode of production is inadequate because there was no class; there was no notion of private property. The entire property belongs to the community. So no individual can access it – thus no class conflicts. Resources were scarce, and the population was small. Gradually, towards the end of primitive communism, there were certain groups of people who were physically strong, and the concept of private property emerged. So primitive communism couldn't survive, and a different kind of society emerged.

Ancient Mode of Production

According to Marx, every stage of history has an endpoint. Therefore, primitive communism was destined to disappear and give way to slavery. Those who possessed physical, political, and material strength held authority over others. Consequently, two classes emerged, introducing the concept of private property. These two classes were: the propertied class (the masters) and the non-propertied class (the slaves). Marx attempted to suggest that over time, different individuals seized plots of land, resulting in theft and leaving a large number of people in misery. These individuals became dependent on the landowners for their livelihood, and this dependency continued to grow. When they were unable to repay their debts, they were sold and employed by the so-called lords. Slaves were treated as mere chattels, devoid of rights, and were treated as commodities that could be bought and sold. Consequently, individuals became slaves, leading to the formation of slave families and masters who were in control. Working without a voice



♦ *The concept of private property*

became increasingly abhorrent, despite the unbearable torture. Slaves were subjected to harsh physical conditions and engaged in agricultural, clerical, and physical labor. If there ever was an abhorrent system in society, it was slavery. This state of affairs was not sustainable, and a new stage had to emerge. Towards the end, an internal struggle ensued, leading slaves and peasants to initiate a revolution against the masters in order to liberate certain slaves from their clutches. Slavery is often referred to as the initial stage of agriculture. Consequently, agrarian capitalism was destined to emerge. Agricultural advancements would take place, and technology would be implemented in farming. People began to recognize the dignity of labor, marking the advent of feudalism or agrarian capitalism.

Feudal Mode of Production

♦ *Two classes, feudal lords and serfs emerged*

At this stage, as Marx stated in the pages of history, we encounter two classes: the feudal lords and the serfs. The lords possessed the land for their own benefit, and their task was to lease the land and employ agricultural laborers on their estates. The lessee owners had to pay specific taxes, while the workers received wages. Indeed, this is a detestable system in which the masters exploit the laborers by neglecting to pay them what they deserve. Marx argued that this phase also exhibited an exploitative nature, with heavy taxes imposed on the serfs. This phase could not expand significantly as industries emerged and people sought employment in urban industries and cities. Consequently, the serfs revolted against the lords. As industries proliferated and urbanization ensued, the focus shifted towards industries, leading to the subsequent stage of industrial capitalism.

Capitalist Mode of Production

At this point, Marx was greatly disturbed by this phase because it was the most reprehensible and witnessed a migration from the rural area to the urban area. Those who had worked in agricultural land transitioned to industry. There were two classes: the working class (known as the proletariat) and the bourgeoisie. Marx aimed to champion the cause of the proletariat, desiring the elimination of exploitative characteristics and the establishment of equality. Hence, Marx was forward-thinking. Socialism signifies a stage in which society is devoid of classes and based on the principle of equality. Marx had experienced socialism, and his ideas formed the basis for its spread. Communism represents the

♦ *The working class (the proletariat) and the bourgeoisie emerged*

ultimate and final stage, characterized by universal equality. Each person works to the best of their abilities and receives according to their needs. When capitalism dissipates and communism emerges, certain elements resembling aspects of capitalism can be found in socialism, albeit in different forms.

According to Marx, socialism is initially communism, and communism later becomes socialism, as everyone is equal and can stand in the same line. A communist society embodies complete equality and lacks the concept of private property. In socialism, there exist two forms of property relations: 1. Public Property 2. Cooperative Ownership. However, in communism, individual property exists, namely state or community property. Everyone receives their rightful share and contributes according to their abilities.

2.1.2.4 Criticism

♦ *Mayo - Marx underestimated the non-economic factors.*

The theory of Marx has attracted numerous critics. Bakunin, one of Marx's harshest critics, stated that Marx lacked the instinct for liberty and was entirely authoritarian. Mayo, another prominent critic, argues that Marx underestimated non-economic factors. He questions Marx's argument that history progresses in a spiral fashion through dialectical leaps, both due to the arbitrary nature of what progress may be considered and the ability to satisfactorily verify the supposed progress. The most significant flaw in Marx's theory appears to be his attempt to link the laws of nature and societal trends. Marx believes that the forces at work in society are exactly like those in nature, working violently, blindly, and destructively until they are understood and taken into account.

♦ *Class struggle*

Marx asserts that development occurs as a result of the clash of opposites. The basis of Marxist dialectics is the idea that everything is in motion. Early Marxists also considered class struggle a crucial aspect of historical materialism. Class struggle arises from changes in the means of production and gives rise to social revolutions. However, this is not always the case. The French Revolution, for example, was a result of social unrest rather than changes in the economic structure. Similarly, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England and the 19th-century Renaissance in India were not caused by changes in the economic structure but by other factors.



♦ *Influence of Hegelian philosophy*

Hegel's philosophy greatly influenced Marx. However, Marx used Hegelian dialectic for the economic interpretation of history and insisted that human history is not a collection of distinct parallel histories like economics and politics, but a single history. For Hegel, the absolute spirit was seen as concrete reality, whereas for Marx, reality was the material world in which economic conditions determined the historical process. Hegel believed that human reason brings about change, leading to the establishment of a perfect state, while Marx believed that class struggle brings about change, leading to the establishment of a classless society.

Although some scholars criticize certain views of Marx, his influence on modern society cannot be denied. The entire nineteenth century was profoundly impacted in the realms of historical writing, political science, and sociology. His political ideology often contradicted his scientific investigations. He made two significant contributions to the scientific method.

♦ *Significant contributions of Marx*

1. He introduced the view that human societies are whole systems in which social groups, institutions, beliefs, and doctrines are interrelated and need to be studied in their interrelations rather than treated in isolation, as in the conventional separate histories of politics, law, religion, and thought. Thucydides stated this earlier in a different manner, namely that historical events are systematically, rationally, and permanently interconnected; and
2. Societies are inherently mutable systems, in which changes are primarily produced by internal contradictions and conflicts, and these changes can be reduced to general statements and principles in order to explain their causes and consequences. Marx viewed history as a dialectical progression towards a classless communist society, and he presented historians with a new economic method of explaining historical phenomena. His approach was essentially practical, and his philosophy of history was, in a way, an amended version of Hegel's philosophy of history. W. H. Walsh, in his book *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, states: "Marx's contri-

bution to the understanding of history, in fact, was not made to the philosophy of history in the proper sense at all.” However, the philosopher is interested in Marxist theory because of the importance Marx seems to place on his main principle. The greatest contribution of Marx was that he accomplished the remarkable task of synthesising, in a critical manner, the entire legacy of social knowledge since Aristotle.

Summarised Overview

The Hegelian approach to history, developed by the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, views history as a process of dialectical progress in which human society evolves through the resolution of contradictions and conflicts. According to Hegelian theory, history progresses in a linear direction, with each stage of development building upon the preceding one. Hegel believed that studying history was essential for comprehending the present, and that the historian’s role was to interpret historical events in light of this broader historical context.

On the other hand, the Marxist approach to history, developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, perceives history as a class struggle in which economic and social forces propel historical change. According to Marxist theory, history advances through a series of stages, each characterized by a particular mode of production and its corresponding set of class relations. Marxists assert that studying history should focus on uncovering the underlying economic and social structures that shape historical events, rather than interpreting them in isolation.

Both the Hegelian and Marxist approaches to history have significantly influenced the field of history, as well as other social sciences. While Hegelian historiography has been criticized for its idealism and its tendency to disregard material factors, Marxist historiography has been criticized for oversimplifying historical processes and reducing all historical events to economic factors. Nevertheless, both traditions continue to influence the study of history today, and their insights continue to shape our understanding of the past.



Self Assessment

1. Compare and contrast the ideology of Hegel with that of Marx.
2. Prepare an essay on the impact of Marxism on Russia and China.
3. Describe Mode of Production.
4. Explain Base and Superstructure.
5. Define historical materialism.
6. Write a note on class struggle.
7. What is process thought?
8. Describe absolute idealism
9. Examine Hegel's view on history.

Assignments

1. Compare and contrast the ideology of Hegel with that of Marx
2. Prepare an essay on the impact of Marxism on Russia and China

Suggested Readings

1. Wright Mills, *Sociological Imagination*, Pelican book, 1973.
2. David Seddon, *Relations of Production*, Frank Cass Publishers, 1978.

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1. E Bentley, *A Companion to Historiography*, Routledge Publishers, 2002.
2. E H Carr, *What is History*, Penguin Books, UK, 1991.
3. G. Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, London Merlin Press, 1971.
4. G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, London, 1978.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Max Weber and Durkheim

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ evaluate the relationship between religious beliefs and economic behaviour.
- ♦ analyse the concept of the “spirit of capitalism”
- ♦ analyse the relationship between social facts and individual behaviour

Background

Max Weber was a German political economist and sociologist. He is considered one of the founders of the modern “anti-positivist” study of sociology and public administration. Although Weber wrote extensively in the field of economics, he also made significant contributions to the sociology of religion and government. His most renowned work is *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, in which he argued that religion was a primary factor in the development of Western and Eastern cultures. Weber asserted that the modern world had forsaken gods due to our actions, and he feared that the loss of religious ideals and commitment posed a threat to human society, leading to an existence devoid of meaning.

Durkheim was greatly influenced by Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer. He incorporated elements of Comte’s positivism and his scientific approach to studying societies. Durkheim also drew inspiration from Herbert Spencer’s functional analysis. However, he simultaneously criticized these sociological endeavors.

Keywords

Calvinism, Social Action, Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism, Antipositivism, Stratification, Sociology of religion



Discussion

2.2.1 The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

♦ Religious devotion

Weber's essay, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," is his most renowned work. Here, Weber presents the contentious thesis that the Protestant ethic influenced the development of capitalism. Religious devotion has typically entailed a rejection of worldly affairs, including the pursuit of wealth. Why was this not the case with Protestantism? In his essay, Weber addresses this paradox, finding his answer in the religious ideas of the Reformation.

♦ Understanding of predestination

Weber argues that certain Protestant ideas, particularly John Calvin's understanding of predestination - that sinful individuals cannot directly know if they are among God's chosen elect, to whom the grace of salvation is offered - favored the rational pursuit of economic gain and worldly activities. The resulting insecurity among Protestants, along with their fear of eternal damnation, led them to seek signs indicating God's guidance in their lives and confirmation of their righteous behavior. Consequently, hard work followed by financial success became a symbol of God's grace. These ideas, combined with traditional religious asceticism, encouraged people to accumulate wealth. Wealth accumulation was not the intended goal of these religious ideas, but rather an unintended consequence of the inherent logic of the doctrines and the advice derived from them, which directly and indirectly encouraged planning and self-denial in the pursuit of economic gain.

♦ Spirit of capitalism

According to Weber, this "spirit of capitalism" not only entailed hard work and entrepreneurship on the part of Protestants but also a sense of responsibility for the resulting gains. Practicing economizing and reinvesting in worthy enterprises became customary economic practices when money was sought not for luxury or self-indulgence, but as a moral affirmation.

Through his celebrated work, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," Max Weber was one of the first scholars to emphasize the moral and spiritual aspects of economic behavior. His analysis of the spiritual and moral conditions necessary for successful economic productivity



♦ *Psychological tensions*

continues to inspire modern social scientists and other intellectuals. His insights and understanding of the flaws of capitalism have also had a lasting impact. He concluded that the capitalist spirit arose more from the psychological tensions created by Calvinist theological obligations in the minds of the faithful than from pure religious devotion. According to Weber, the anxiety and inner loneliness resulting from the Calvinist doctrine of predestination became an overwhelming driving force in believers' minds, compelling them to essentially enslave themselves to materialistic pursuits while simultaneously sparking an unprecedented increase in economic development.

♦ *Capitalism divorced from its religious sentiment*

However, he also observed that once capitalism became disconnected from its religious roots, it transformed into a secular ethic with "unstoppable power," leading him to criticize capitalists as "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart." Weber was fiercely independent, refusing to align himself with any ideological stance. Despite his repeated forays into the political arena, he was not truly a political figure capable of compromising in pursuit of his goals. Weber regarded the modern world as having been abandoned by the gods because humanity had driven them away through rationalization, replacing mysticism. He envisioned the future as a world devoid of emotion, passion, or commitment, unaffected by personal appeals, loyalty, grace, or the ethics of charismatic heroes. In many ways, the twentieth century realized his deepest fears, yet it also witnessed remarkable advancements in all aspects of human life.

2.2.1.1 Sociology of Religion

♦ *Occidental and Oriental cultures*

Weber's work on the sociology of religion began with the essay "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" and continued with the analysis of "The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism," "The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism," and "Ancient Judaism." His three main themes were the impact of religious ideas on economic activities, the relationship between social stratification and religious ideas, and the distinct characteristics of Western civilization. His objective was to discover the reasons behind the divergent development paths of Occidental and Oriental cultures. In his analysis, Weber maintained that Puritan (and more broadly, Protestant) religious ideas had a significant influence on the development of economic systems in Europe and the United

States. However, he acknowledged that they were not the sole factors in this development. Weber identified the concept of the “disenchantment of the world” as a crucial distinguishing aspect of Western culture.

♦ *“ideal types”*

Weber’s sociological theories had a profound impact on twentieth-century sociology. He introduced the concept of “ideal types,” which served as historical examples to compare and contrast different societies. This approach examines the fundamental elements of social institutions and their interrelationships. His study of the sociology of religion facilitated a new level of cross-cultural comprehension and investigation.

2.2.2 Emile Durkheim –Social facts

♦ *The social facts have an objective reality.*

Durkheim maintained that all elements of society are part of the natural world. Morality and religion are also part of the natural world and can be studied scientifically. According to him, sociology is the science of institutions, which refers to collective ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Durkheim coined the term “social facts” to describe phenomena that have an existence in and of themselves. He defined social facts in his “Rules”. He defined social facts as “a category of facts which present very special characteristics: they consist of manners of acting, thinking, and feeling external to the individual, which are invested with a coercive power by virtue of which they exercise control over him.” He maintained that social facts have an objective reality. Just as physicists study the physical world, sociologists can study it. For Durkheim, social facts are internal to individuals, and they can only exist through individuals.

♦ **A society is a collection of ideas, beliefs, and sentiments*

According to Durkheim, a society is not merely a group of individuals living in one particular geographical location. It is a collection of ideas, beliefs, and sentiments of all types that are realized through individuals. When individuals interact with one another, it creates a reality. Reality is the result of the fusion of individual consciences. This fusion of individual consciences is a sui generis reality.

Thus, society is greater than the sum of its components. It surpasses in terms of complexity, depth, and richness. Durkheim refers to this psychic reality as the “collective conscience” or the collective consciousness of individual consciences that, once formed, follow their own laws. Society and social phenomena can only be explained in



♦ *Social facts*

sociological terms. Society cannot be explained in biological or psychological terms. Social facts are the fundamental facts that constitute and express the psychic reality that is society. Individuals only acquire certain characteristics from society, such as language, a monetary system, values, religious beliefs, suicidal tendencies, or technological advancements. This is not possible if they live in total isolation.

2.2.2.1 Different Kinds of Social Facts

♦ *Various types of social facts*

Durkheim identifies various types of social facts, with “constraints” remaining a prominent characteristic of each. For instance, social facts encompass a society’s legal code, religious beliefs, concept of beauty, monetary system, modes of attire, and language. In these instances, it is evident how society exerts its influence on individuals externally through the establishment of social norms and values that expect or encourage conformity. Currents of opinion, or social phenomena that manifest through individual cases, are also considered social facts. Examples include rates of marriage, birth, or suicide. In these cases, the impact of society on individuals may not be as apparent. However, these phenomena can be examined using statistics, which aggregate individual cases to express a specific state of the collective mindset. Morphological or structural social facts also exist, encompassing the demographic and material conditions of life. These include the number, nature, and interrelationships of societal components, their geographical distribution, and their means of communication and transportation. These types of social facts are also influenced by collective modes of thinking, acting, or feeling and possess the same characteristics of externality and constraint as the other types.

2.2.2.2 The Range of Social Facts

♦ *Social facts operate at varying degrees of formality and complexity.*

Durkheim identifies a wide range of social facts that roughly correspond to his intellectual development. He initially focuses on social morphology in his early works. However, in his later works, he shifts his attention to social norms and values, particularly morality and religion. His concept of coercion also evolves, along with his use of the term “constraint.” In his early works, “constraint” implies a more repressive or obligatory nature, whereas in his later works, he emphasizes the attractive or devotional aspects of social facts. He explores how individuals are voluntarily drawn to specific symbols, norms, or beliefs. In the latter case, society still constrains an individual’s thoughts and behavior, albeit in a significantly

different manner. It is important to note that social facts operate at various levels of formality and complexity. Durkheim occasionally portrays society as homogeneous or monolithic in his language.

2.2.2.3 The Rules for Studying Social Facts

♦ *Studying social facts*

Durkheim's Rules for Studying Social Facts comprise a set of rules for investigating social facts. The foremost and most crucial rule is to consider social facts as objects. Social facts possess an independent existence from the subject who knows them and exert their influence upon the observer. They can be distinguished by their resistance to individual will; modifying social facts necessitates arduous effort as a result of collective action.

♦ *Rules for studying social facts*

The second rule for studying social facts dictates that the sociologist must precisely define and delineate the group of phenomena under examination. This will structure the research and establish verifiability as a condition for studying the object. The sociologist must also strive for utmost objectivity and eliminate any subjective bias or attachment to the subject under investigation. Likewise, the sociologist must systematically discard preconceived notions and meticulously scrutinize the facts before passing judgments.

♦ *Durkheim's social facts*

Durkheim applies these rules to empirical evidence derived from statistics, ethnography, and history. He introduces a significant rationalist element into his sociological methodology. He contends that human behavior can be explained through observable cause-and-effect relationships, employing his rules. He frequently employs a comparative-historical approach, considering it the crux of the sociological method to eliminate extraneous causes and identify commonalities among diverse societies and their social facts. His aim is to identify general laws that possess universal applicability. Durkheim also posits that social facts can only be comprehended in relation to other social facts. For instance, he elucidates suicide rates not in terms of psychological factors but rather in terms of different social institutions and their integration and regulation of individuals within a group.

♦ *Durkheim's Historical methodology*

In his work, Durkheim also traces the historical development of political, educational, religious, economic, and moral institutions, particularly those prevalent in Western society. He maintains a clear distinction between



historical analysis and sociology. The historical method merely seeks to describe past events, while sociology endeavors to explain them. In other words, sociology explores the causes and functions of social facts as they evolve over time.

Summarised Overview

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber explores the relationship between religious beliefs and economic behavior. He argues that the rise of modern capitalism was closely linked to the Protestant Reformation and the development of a specific religious ethic that valued hard work, frugality, and the accumulation of wealth. Weber contends that this “spirit of capitalism” was driven by economic factors such as trade growth and the development of modern accounting practices, as well as cultural and religious factors like the rise of a “worldly asceticism” that emphasized the importance of work and the pursuit of economic success.

Weber’s work has greatly influenced our understanding of the cultural and historical origins of modern capitalism and has sparked debates about the role of religion, culture, and ideology in economic development.

Emile Durkheim argued that social facts both constrain and enable individual behavior, and that they are best studied through empirical methods such as statistical analysis. Durkheim believed that social facts were crucial to comprehending social order and stability, as they could explain patterns of behavior and social change. However, the concept of social facts has been criticized for neglecting the role of individual agency and subjective experience, as well as for its failure to explain the processes of social change in a dynamic and nuanced manner.

Self Assessment

1. Mention the theorists who have influenced Durkheim.
2. Make a note on the different kinds of social facts.
3. Examine the range of social facts.
4. Analyse the rules framed by Durkheim to study the social facts.
5. Differentiate between social action and social facts.
6. Make a note about power and authority.
7. Examine how Max Weber attributed the rise of capitalism to the protestant ethic.

Assignments

1. Review the works of Emile Durkheim
2. Bring out the views of Max Weber on sociology.

Suggested Readings

1. Alpert, H ,*Emile Durkheim and His Sociology*. New York: Columbia University Press,1961.

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1. Bellah, R *Durkheim and History*, American Sociological Review, 1959.
2. Bellah, R “Introduction.” in *Emile Durkheim: On Morality and Society*. Chicago University,1973.
3. Weber,M, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York : London :Free Press ; Collier Macmillan, 1947.
4. Weber, M. *The Sociology of Religion*. Boston: Beacon 1963.

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Variants of Marxism as a Tool of Historic Analysis

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the basic principles of Marxism
- ◆ analyse the differences between structuralist and humanist approaches to Marxism
- ◆ critically examine the contributions of specific Marxist theorists, such as Louis Althusser, Maurice Herbert Dobb, and Henri Lefebvre.

Background

In the field of historical study, Marxist theory has been used to analyze the development of societies and economies, particularly in relation to the struggle between classes. Different variants of Marxism have emerged over time, each with its own perspective on the role of economic and social factors in historical development.

Some key variants of Marxism in historical study include Marxist historiography, which emphasizes the role of class struggle in shaping historical events; cultural Marxism, which focuses on the role of culture in shaping social relations and political power; and structural Marxism, which emphasizes the importance of economic structures and their impact on social relations.

Keywords

Structural Marxism, Overdetermination, Annales school, Bourgeois, Proletariat, Punitive Will.

Discussion

2.3.1 Louis Althusser

Louis Althusser, a prominent member of the French Communist Party and a key figure in the development of



◆ concepts and ideas

Marxist theory in the 20th century, was born in the French colony of Algeria in 1918. Althusser's work is known for its original and innovative contributions to Marxist philosophy and its critical engagement with other philosophical and political theories of his time. He developed several influential concepts and ideas, including the notion of "ideology" as a crucial component of social and political power, and the concept of "overdetermination" to explain the complex interactions between various factors that shape historical events.

◆ "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

One of Althusser's most influential works is his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, in which he argues that ideology functions as a system of beliefs and values deeply embedded in social institutions and practices, such as education, religion, and the media. According to Althusser, these institutions and practices help reproduce and reinforce the dominant ideology of the ruling class, maintaining the existing social order and relations of power.

◆ Impact on Marxist theory

Althusser's work has had a significant impact on Marxist theory and philosophy, as well as on other fields such as literary theory and cultural studies. However, his ideas have also been subject to criticism and debate, particularly regarding his conception of ideology and its role in social and political power.

2.3.1.1 Althusser's Views on Marx

◆ Marx-centric

Althusser's relationship with Marx is well-defined. As a professor, Althusser supervised numerous projects related to Marx that were submitted by his students. He generally agreed with the characterization that he was particularly focused on Marx. His books "For Marx" and "Reading Capital" both engage with Marx on a theoretical level. Althusser employed a unique method compared to other theorists to analyze Marx. He believed that his method of analysis involved reading Marx's intentions rather than just his texts. He referred to his method of analysis as "symptomatic reading." He wrote, "The invisible is defined by the visible as its invisible, its forbidden vision: the invisible." This is Marx's second reading: a reading that could be termed "symptomatic" as it uncovers the event revealed in the text it reads and, at the same time, relates it to a different text that is present as a necessary absence in the first. What sets this new reading apart from the old one is the fact that in the new reading, the second text is connected to the gaps in the first text.

♦ *Fundamental presuppositions*

For Althusser and his students, Marx was approached through a perspective that emphasized the fundamental presuppositions of his work. The significance was not merely obtained from the superficial text but by extrapolating the author's mindset. The aim of such an analysis was to unveil the author's repressed meanings and convictions that are not apparent in a superficial reading. It is a scrupulous process that entails analyzing in considerable depth.

Structural Marxism

♦ *structuralism*

Structural Marxism is an approach to Marxist philosophy based on structuralism, primarily associated with the work of the British philosopher Louis Althusser and his students. It was influential in the United Kingdom during the 1960s and 1970s and also came to influence philosophers, political theorists, and sociologists outside the UK during the 1970s. Other proponents of structural Marxism were the sociologist Nicos Poulantzas and the anthropologist Maurice Godelier. Many of Althusser's students broke with structural Marxism in the late 1960s and 1970s. Structural Marxism arose in opposition to the instrumental Marxism that dominated many British universities during the 1970s. In contrast to other forms of Marxism, Althusser stressed that Marxism was a science that examined objective structures, and he believed that historicity and phenomenological Marxism, which were based on Marx's early works, were caught in a "pre-scientific ideology."

♦ *Logic of capitalism*

Structuralists view the state in a capitalist mode of production as taking a specifically capitalist form, not because particular individuals are in powerful positions, but because the state reproduces the logic of capitalist structure in its economic, legal, and political institutions. Hence, from a structuralist perspective, one would argue that state institutions function in the long-term interests of capital and capitalism rather than in the short-term interests of members of the capitalist class. Thus, the state and its institutions have a certain degree of independence from specific elites in the ruling or capitalist class.

The structuralist tradition of the social sciences emphasizes the implicit structures that order a larger whole. An entity is not merely the sum of its parts, but a nuanced series of related systems that constitute a structured whole. It is used broadly across various disciplines and was common among Marxist theorists of the 1960s and 1970s. Early in his academic career, Althusser himself encouraged other



♦ *Ordering structures of society*

♦ *History is the result of a complex and shifting interplay of multiple factors*

♦ *Understandings of history and social structures.*

Marxist scholars to embrace structuralism. Even before Althusser started writing, structuralism had integrated Lacan and Freud's concepts of psychoanalysis into what Deleuze called "Third Order" structuralism. This structuralism was overwhelmingly popular in British academia between the structuralist and post-structuralist waves. It emphasized the role of the "imagined" and the "real" in the formation of society. It integrated an analysis of ideology into the structuralist range of topics. It is reasonable to read Marx through a structural lens because much of Marx's work focuses on the ordering structures of society. Marx writes about the processes that led to the material conditions of his society and how these same structures will develop in the future. All parts of society, from customs to culture to power dynamics, are interconnected. For Marx, the structures surrounding material conditions are totalizing and define the other parts of society. In brief, economics is the basis on which society is built and, therefore, the entire social whole is best analyzed from material conditions. These material economic structures can be considered the structural side of Marx that is ripe for structural analysis. However, most structural analysis of Marx is overshadowed by Althusser, who does not make such an analysis.

Overdetermination and Structuralism

Overdetermination is a pivotal concept in the work of Louis Althusser, a French Marxist philosopher. It denotes the notion that historical events and social structures are not determined by a solitary factor or cause, but rather by a complex and shifting interplay of multiple factors. In his essay "Contradiction and Overdetermination," Althusser argues that history is not determined by a solitary, essential cause, but is the result of a complex and shifting interplay of multiple factors. According to Althusser, "Overdetermination is the existence, in a given process, of multiple, relatively independent, heterogeneous, and not necessarily coordinated determinations and/or causes."

In this sense, Althusser's concept of overdetermination is closely connected to his broader comprehension of Marxist theory and its emphasis on analyzing the intricate dynamics of social and historical change. As he observes, "Marxism is the science of the complex and contradictory totality of social formations and their historical transformations." Althusser's concept of overdetermination challenges simplistic or

♦ *Complex and contradictory totality of social formations*

reductionist understandings of history and social structures, as it underscores the significance of analyzing the intricate dynamics of social and historical change. It implies that historical events cannot be reduced to a solitary cause or explanation, but must be comprehended in their complexity and totality. Althusser writes, "The crucial point to grasp is that, in history, the effects of a cause are always overdetermined because they result from the action of a plurality of causes."

♦ *system of relations that inherent in it*

Overdetermination also suggests that economic factors cannot be regarded as the exclusive determinant of historical change, but must be analyzed in relation to other factors, such as ideology, politics, culture, and so on. As Althusser argues, "The economy does not determine everything. It is only one element in the complex and contradictory totality of social formations." Althusser's comprehension of overdetermination is closely tied to his concept of structuralism, which emphasizes that social structures and institutions are defined by the relationships and interconnections between their parts and are constantly changing and evolving as different factors come into play. As Althusser points out, "Structures are the result of a complex interplay of forces and relations of forces that are never fixed or permanent."

♦ *process of change and transformation.*

However, while Althusser's concept of overdetermination is influenced by structuralism, it also represents a departure from traditional structuralist approaches. As Althusser asserts, "Structuralism tends to regard the structure as a system of relations that can be grasped in isolation from the processes that produce and reproduce it and from the contradictions that are inherent in it."

♦ *Concept of overdeterminism*

Althusser's concept of overdetermination also has significant implications for the Marxist understanding of history. According to Althusser, history cannot be understood simply as a linear progression of events or as the outcome of the actions of great individuals. Instead, history is the outcome of a complex interplay of multiple factors, including economic, political, ideological, and cultural factors, stating "History is not a succession of 'historical events,' but a process of transformation and re-transformation of social relations." In other words, history is not merely a collection of facts and events, but a dynamic and ongoing process of change and transformation.



2.3.2 Georges Lefebvre

♦ The concept of punitive will

Georges Lefebvre, a renowned French historian, is notable for his research on the French Revolution. In his book "The Coming of the French Revolution," Lefebvre presented a fresh interpretation of the revolution's causes, giving prominence to the influence of social and economic factors in molding political transformation. Lefebvre contended that the French Revolution was propelled by a perception of inequality and subjugation within the lower classes, resulting in what he termed a "retributive determination."

2.3.2.1 Punitive will

♦ manifestation of class struggle

Lefebvre defined punitive will as "the will to punish those who have oppressed or exploited us." According to Lefebvre, punitive will was the driving force behind the French Revolution. In his book, he wrote that "the years before the Revolution were marked by a growing sense of injustice among the common people, who were heavily burdened by taxes and subjected to the whims of their lords... It was this sense of injustice that fueled the punitive will that drove the Revolution." The concept of punitive will is closely related to the Marxist view of history, which emphasises the role of class struggle in shaping historical change. Marx believed that history was driven by the struggle between different classes, each with its own interests and aspirations. The concept of punitive will can be seen as a manifestation of class struggle, in which the lower classes seek to assert their rights and interests against the dominant classes.

♦ shaping of historical change

Lefebvre's concept of punitive will also highlights the importance of economic and social factors in shaping historical change. In contrast to earlier historians who had emphasised the role of ideas and ideologies in shaping the French Revolution, Lefebvre argued that the revolution was driven by more concrete material concerns, such as the high taxes and economic exploitation suffered by the lower classes. As he wrote, "The common people were motivated not by abstract ideals, but by their material interests and the sense of injustice that arose from them."

Furthermore, Lefebvre's concept of punitive will emphasises the agency of the lower classes in shaping historical change. As he wrote, "The Revolution was not simply a matter of the common people reacting to the actions of the nobility and

◆ *Based on classical view of the economy*

clergy, but of the people taking action themselves to assert their own interests and rights.” In this sense, Lefebvre’s concept of punitive will challenges earlier, more deterministic views of historical change, which saw history as driven by abstract forces such as ideas and ideologies. Instead, Lefebvre emphasises the importance of concrete material concerns and the agency of historical actors in shaping historical change. Lefebvre’s concept of punitive will also has implications for contemporary social and political struggles. For example, it can be seen as a call to action for those who seek to resist and challenge oppressive structures in society.

2.3.3 Maurice Herbert Dobb

◆ *Classical perspectives*

Maurice Herbert Dobb was the first Marxist economist of his generation in Great Britain. He studied Soviet economics and collaborated with Piero Sraffa on the analysis of Ricardo’s economic theory. Dobb experienced significant social and economic upheaval during the time, primarily due to World Wars I and II. He offered a Marxist critique of neoclassical theory, basing his economic framework on the classical perspective and the marginalist model. According to Dobb, the theory of value had two key characteristics: value stems from utility, and individuals aim to maximize their utility. His most notable contribution was his examination of capitalism, which vividly demonstrates the profound influence of Marxism in his work.

2.3.3.1 Dobb’s on Capitalism

◆ *The phase of transition*

Maurice Dobb viewed capitalism as a system in which economic relations are regulated through contracts. Capitalism is associated with the organization of production for a market. He stated that capitalism is a system in which the labor force becomes a commodity, bought and sold in the market like any other item of exchange. Economic systems exhibit peculiarities in each time period, characterized by unique and distinct economic arrangements. Throughout history, societies have been defined by class divisions. Classes share a common identity and engage in the same relationships when it comes to distributing the surplus labor’s rewards. The appropriation of surplus labor varied across different stages. Dobb concluded that the development of capitalism can be divided into several stages. The first stage is productive capitalism, spanning from the latter half of the 16th century to the early 17th



century. The second stage of capitalist development occurred in the late 18th century and the first half of the 19th century.

Feudalism to Capitalism

In his book “Studies in the Development of Capitalism,” Maurice Dobb initiated the transition debate in a detailed manner. Dobb contended that feudalism declined not due to an external shock but due to internal contradictions. According to him, capitalism emerged through specific changes within the feudal system. The agrarian self-sufficiency of the Middle Ages posed a threat to the rural economy when surplus production surpassed it. Subsequently, markets were established to facilitate the sale of the surplus agricultural products, leading to the expansion of trade. The feudal economy encountered various challenges as a result. Both lords and serfs began to prefer cash payments due to increasing monetization. Consequently, feudal dues were converted into cash rents, further eroding the social fabric of the feudal system. The encroachment of the market economy on feudal reservations led to conflicts between the rulers and the ruled, as well as between the controllers of the new economy and traditional feudal power. Thus, the transition encompassed not only economic changes but also social and political transformations. The American economist Paul Sweezy refuted Dobb’s “internal contradiction” theory in his work “Feudalism: A Critique.” Sweezy argued that the gradual decline of feudalism in Europe was primarily driven by the expansion of Europe’s foreign trade.

◆ *Development of capitalism.*

The Emergence of the Bourgeoisie

Dobb argued that the rise of the bourgeoisie was driven by the development of market relations and the expansion of trade, which created opportunities for profit and wealth accumulation outside of the traditional feudal hierarchy. He believed that the bourgeoisie played a progressive role in history, breaking down the feudal order and laying the foundation for the development of capitalism and modern industry.

◆ *Capitalist mode of production*

However, Dobb also emphasized the exploitative nature of bourgeois society, arguing that the accumulation of wealth and power by the bourgeoisie was achieved through the exploitation of the working class. He believed that the interests of the bourgeoisie were fundamentally opposed to those of the working class and that the struggle between these

◆ *Surplus value*

two classes was the driving force of historical development.

Industrial Capital

♦ *Development of industrial capitalism.*

The second issue is that a portion of the merchant class directly seized the means of production. Dobb states that these processes are not independent but that capital dominates overproduction. Capitalist merchant manufacturers had already emerged in the 13th century, alongside uprisings of the traders in opposition to these merchants. Dobb presents two prerequisites for the implementation of industrial capitalism: the breakdown of urban localism and the monopolies of craftsmen's guilds. Dobb viewed industrial capital as the driving force behind the capitalist mode of production, representing the social relationship between capitalists who owned the means of production and workers who sold their labor power in exchange for wages.

♦ *Mercantile system*

According to Dobb, the accumulation of industrial capital was achieved through the exploitation of workers, who were compelled to work for wages that were lower than the value they produced. The surplus value generated by this exploitation was then seized by capitalists as profit, enabling them to amass more capital and extend their control over the means of production.

♦ *Growth of the proletariat*

Dobb believed that industrial capital had a transformative impact on society, creating novel forms of economic organization and social relations that fundamentally changed the essence of human existence. He argued that the development of industrial capital was responsible for the emergence of the modern industrial economy, characterized by large-scale production, mass consumption, and global markets.

Mercantilism and Capital Accumulation

♦ *Accumulation of capital*

There is no doubt, according to Dobb, that a capitalist class had to accumulate capital before it was possible to initiate large capitalist enterprises, and capitalism would become the predominant form of production. However, this capital accumulation took place through an accumulation of rights in the hands of a social class that could convert them into an effective means of production. This process of capital accumulation faced significant difficulties caused by wars and economic crises. Dobb establishes two phases of capital accumulation. The first phase is the one just mentioned. The second phase would be characterized by an expanding



export market. In summary, the mercantile system was an exploitative system based on trade and regulated by the state.

Rise of the Proletariat

◆ *Impact of Industrial Revolution*

Dobb believed that the growth of the proletariat was the result of a lengthy historical process of class struggle, in which peasants and artisans were gradually compelled to leave their land and compelled to sell their labour power to capitalists. This process, he argued, was driven by the development of market relations, which generated a demand for labour power and enabled capitalists to amass wealth by exploiting the labour of others.

◆ *Growth of industrial capitalism*

According to Dobb, the emergence of the proletariat represented a significant historical turning point, as it created the potential for a new type of social order based on the collective ownership of the means of production. He believed that the interests of the proletariat were fundamentally opposed to those of the bourgeoisie, and that the struggle between these two classes would ultimately determine the course of historical development.

The Impact of the Industrial Revolution

◆ *Industrial Revolution*

Dobb asserts that the Great Economic Collapse of 1873 marks the division between two stages of capitalism: the first being prosperous, lively, and vigorous, and the second exhibiting more disturbance and signs of decline. According to Dobb, the Industrial Revolution gave rise to a new class of capitalists who exploited the working class and amassed wealth through labor exploitation. He argued that factory and mine working conditions were frequently brutal and dehumanizing, with workers compelled to endure long hours for meager wages in order to survive.

◆ *Bourgeoisification of the proletariat*

In addition, Dobb criticized the impact of the Industrial Revolution on traditional modes of production and social organization. He believed that the growth of industrial capitalism obliterated traditional crafts and trades, eroding the social relations that had developed in pre-industrial societies. Dobb observed the emergence of a fresh class of wage laborers, who were severed from the means of production, as a primary source of social inequality and exploitation.

Developments During the Interwar Period

Dobb points out that certain economic structural transformations occurred as a result of the First World War and

◆ *Economic transformation*

changes in production conditions and markets. The interwar period was an era of monopoly and rapid growth that was disrupted by the Great Depression. The difficulty of solving this crisis was largely due to its universality. No nation, except Soviet Russia, escaped it. One of the novel features of capitalism in its final phase is the emergence of a new middle class. According to Dobb, there has even been a bourgeoisieification of the proletariat. All of this is a consequence of the fact that late capitalism encounters a dormant class struggle and therefore attains greater stability than before. A subsequent development in modern capitalism is the rise of what has been termed “absentee capitalism,” which refers to the separation between ownership and management. This can be observed in mercantilist companies such as corporations. Likewise, a series of technical changes occurred during this period, facilitating a new form of production known as mass production. Mass production is characterized by a greater division of labor across various stages.

Developments during the Post-War Period

◆ *Features of Capitalist world*

In the fifteen years following the Great War, two significant features emerge with regard to the capitalist world. Firstly, there is a notable rise in the economic activities of the state, known as State Capitalism. Secondly, there is a shift in the status and relations of the pre-colonial sectors and their previous subordination to imperialist countries. The independence of these regions marks a distinct decline in colonialism during this period.

2.3.3.2 Value Theory

◆ *Value of a commodity is determined by the amount of socially necessary labour time required to produce it*

At the core of Dobb’s Value Theory lies the notion of socially necessary labor time. This represents the time required to produce a commodity under average conditions, utilizing the most efficient techniques available. This concept holds significance as it provides a means of quantifying the value of various commodities and comparing them to one another. According to Dobb’s Value Theory, the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of socially necessary labor time necessary to produce it. Hence, if one worker can produce a commodity in less time than another worker, the value of the commodity produced by the former will be lower than that of the commodity produced by the latter. This is due to the fact that the former worker utilizes a lesser amount of socially necessary labor time to produce the same commodity. In a capitalist economy, the



capitalist class possesses the means of production (i.e., the factories, machinery, etc.) and employs the working class to manufacture commodities. The capitalist class compensates the working class with a wage for their labor, which is lower than the value of the commodities they produce.

♦ *The capitalist class uses their power to shape the legal and political institutions*

The surplus value generated by the workers is appropriated by the capitalists as profit. This exploitation of the working class becomes feasible because the value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labor time required to produce it. Since the capitalist owns the means of production, they can control the conditions under which the workers produce commodities, and they can utilize this control to reduce the amount of socially necessary labor time needed to produce those commodities. Consequently, the value of the commodities produced by the workers exceeds the value of the wages they receive. Over time, this exploitation becomes entrenched in the form of capitalist relations of production. The capitalist class assumes dominance in society, and the working class becomes reliant on them for employment. The capitalist class employs their power to shape the legal and political institutions of society in their own interests, leaving the working class with limited means to challenge their authority.

According to Dobb, the measure of value or price had two primary characteristics:

♦ *Primary characteristics of the measure of value*

1. Value provides utility; that is, it is derived from utility and depends on the utility it produces for economic agents.
2. Individuals maximize their utility rationally.

Dobb observed two traditions in classical thinking.

♦ *Traditions in classical thinking*

1. The Tradition of Adam Smith Dobb, as a connoisseur of classical economists, was well aware of the many ambiguities in Smith's work but considered that the introduction of the principle of the invisible hand of the market created harmony. It states that by seeking to satisfy their own interests, all individuals are led by an invisible hand that allows them to achieve the best possible social objective.
2. The class conflict represented by Ricardo, Ricardo

saw the economy from the point of view of the production of the labor theory of value, which affirmed that all production costs are, in fact, labor costs. These costs are paid either directly or by accumulating them to capital. For this reason, he argued that prices would depend on the amount of work incorporated into the goods or services. Dobb's contribution to this vision is the valuation of quantities of merchandise. Apart from Ricardo's vision, Dobb does not fail to recognize the importance of Sraffa's contribution. Sraffa's contribution resolves some formal inconsistencies that are widely recognized and affect the model of Marx (and Ricardo) regarding the problem of the transformation of values into prices.

Summarised Overview

Althusser's approach to Marxism emphasised the importance of structural analysis and the role of ideology in maintaining capitalist domination. He believed that social structures and relations were overdetermined, meaning that they were influenced by a complex web of factors that interacted in ways that could not be reduced to a single cause or factor. Althusser also emphasised the role of the state in maintaining the capitalist mode of production and saw the need for a revolutionary vanguard to lead the working class in the struggle for socialism.

Maurice Herbert Dobb's work focused on the emergence of the capitalist mode of production and the exploitation of the working class. He argued that the capitalist mode of production was characterised by the separation of the producers from the means of production and that this gave rise to a class of capitalists who exploited the labour of workers to accumulate capital. Dobb saw socialism as a necessary response to the inequalities and injustices of capitalism and believed that the working class was the driving force behind historical development.

Henri Lefebvre's work on the "punitive will" focused on the ways in which the state uses punishment and repression to maintain social control. He argued that this was a key element of capitalist domination and that the struggle for freedom and social justice required a radical transformation of the state. Lefebvre also emphasised the importance of urban space in the reproduction of capitalist social relations and saw the need for a revolutionary praxis that could transform urban space and create a new society.



Despite their different approaches to Marxist theory, Althusser, Dobb, and Lefebvre all shared a commitment to understanding history through the lens of class struggle and the social relations of production. They all saw the need for revolutionary change and the creation of a new socialist society based on principles of freedom, justice, and equality.

Self Assessment

1. Define Althusser's relationship with Marxism.
2. Explain Structural Marxism. .
3. Who was Georges Lefebvre?
4. Bring out the characteristics of the writings of Georges Lefebvre.
5. How is capital accumulated according to Dobb?
6. Examine Dobb's view on the inter war period and post war period.
7. Explain Value Theory.

Assignments

1. Critically review the works of Maurice Herbert Dobb.
2. Analyse the contributions of Georges Lefebvre to French historiography.
3. Review the impact of Structural Marxism.

Suggested Readings

1. Aram Veesser, *The New Historicism*, Routledge, 2016.
2. Arthus Marwick, *New Nature of History*.
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4. G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History* London 1978
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6. M C Lemon, *The Philosophy of History*,
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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



Interdisciplinary Approaches in History

BLOCK-03



French Historical Revolutions

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ learn the contributions made by the Annales movement in historiography
- ◆ understand the historical background of the emergence of the Annales
- ◆ know the salient features of the Annales historiography in the formative period
- ◆ discern the founding historians and their historiographical innovations by the analysis of their major works

Background

Prior to the 20th century, historical writing was plagued by numerous issues and constraints that have been the subject of continuous debate and criticism. Historical literature was frequently biased towards specific groups or perspectives, reflecting the author's interests and ideologies. This prejudice may lead to a biased or one-sided view of historical events, perpetuating myths and stereotypes. It also focused on a narrow range of events or individuals, disregarding other aspects of social, economic, and cultural life. This selectivity could lead to a skewed or incomplete understanding of historical events and their causes. These problems have been the subject of ongoing critique and have resulted in the emergence of new approaches to historical writing, such as the Annales School and postcolonial and feminist perspectives. These new approaches have aimed to address these limitations and provide a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of historical events.

Keywords

The Annales movement, 'The Royal Touch', Feudal society, Lounge Duree, Total History



Discussion

3.1.1 The Annales Movement

On 15th January 1929, a new journal titled *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* published its first issue. Two professors from Strasbourg University were the masterminds behind this new initiative: Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. The journal was a revolt against the event-based linear narrative of traditional political history. What Febvre and Bloch suggested through the journal was the need for a new kind of history that is problem-oriented in approach, interdisciplinary in method, and 'total history' in scope. To achieve this ambitious goal – that is, a thorough understanding of the past – these scholars introduced new concepts of historical time such as structure, conjuncture, and event, a new method of serialization and quantification of historical data, and a new approach to gain insights from other social science disciplines to understand the past. All these historiographical trends are named after the title of the journal: The Annales. In traditional historiography, it is referred to as the Annales school. However, there are often contradicting trends among historians who present themselves as integral to the Annales school. Therefore, it is necessary to refer to it as The Annales Movement to encompass the diverse trajectories of writing history within 'the Annales School.'

♦ *The Annales school: Against the event-based linear narrative of traditional political history.*

♦ *It established a sociological turn in historiography.*

♦ *Founded by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch*

♦ *Movement was largely active outside the framework of the university system*

Considering the style and emphasis of writing, the Annales historians are classified into three generations. The founders were Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, who revolutionized the domain of historical writing during the radical phase (1920-1945) with new themes and methods. The foundational dispositions of the Annales Movement – such as adherence to interdisciplinarity and comparative approaches, perception of total history, history of mentalities, etc. – were laid out by these pioneers. However, the Annales Movement was largely active outside the framework of the university system during this period.

Fernand Braudel, the intellectual heir of Febvre, marked the beginning of the second generation of the Annales (1945-1968). Having lived through the World Wars and having been exposed to diverse experiences of people worldwide, he brilliantly extended the scope of the movement by introducing novel concepts regarding time, collaborating



♦ *Second Generation: Movement became institutionalised*

♦ *Third Generation: Diverse approach of Historians*

with other social science disciplines, and establishing the theoretical possibilities of structuralism. It was during his period that the movement became institutionalised. More funding and projects began to flow in, owing to the intellectual stature of Braudel in French academia. By the 1970s, the third generation of the *Annales* came into force. This period is characterized by the diverse and even contradictory approaches of historians. The political and intellectual changes in France encouraged third-generation historians to pursue new paths that go beyond the framework set by Braudel.

3.1.1.1 Fernand Braudel and the Second Generation

Fernand Braudel worked as a professor at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil. It was for a short period of two years. In 1937, he voyaged back to France. During this journey, he met an intellectual giant; Lucian Febvre. They discussed many flaws in the methodology employed in contemporary historical writing and concluded with an observation that change is needed in the practice of history writing. By the end of the journey, Braudel became an intellectual heir of Febvre. What is more remarkable in this voyage is a change of title. Braudel had been working on his thesis which was a traditional political and diplomatic history of a king named Philip II. He wanted to study Philip II and Mediterranean history during his period. However, after meeting with Febvre, Braudel became convinced that the title of his thesis should be reversed, making it *The Mediterranean and Philip II* instead of *Philip II and the Mediterranean*. Sounds like a wordplay? No. It was more than a twisting of words. One had to cross an ocean of traditional historiography to make such a change. The title change implies the change in paradigm that constituted the fundamentals of the second generation of the *Annales*.

♦ *The engagement with Lucian Febvre altered his historiographical outlook*

♦ *Stressed on the role of geography marking a shift in historiography too*

Structure, Conjuncture, Event

The Mediterranean has been a gigantic historical work, consisting of around six lakh words! As mentioned above, the initial plan was to write a political history of Philip II. But with the encounter with the *Annales* legacy of historical writing, Braudel changed his mind and eventually, the work became a history of the Mediterranean Sea and King Philip II appeared only in the final part. The book has three parts that indicate a tripartite division of Braudelian history. These

♦ *The Mediterranean*

♦ *Tripartite division of Braudelian history*

♦ *The First part is about structure*

♦ *The role of geography*

♦ *longue durée*

categorizations of historical experience were based on the novel conception of space and time. Let us go through *The Mediterranean* to understand the basic pillars of Braudelian historiography.

The First part is about structure. You may be familiar with this word. A structure or system is a collective of individual units. For instance, the solar system. It is a collective of the sun, planets, and other cosmic objects. Each unit has its own characteristics. However, as it comes together, it builds a system or structure which is the subtotal of all these units but is not solely dependent on a single unit. Take another example from social science; familial structures. The structure of the family in a society is the totality of each family unit even when they are different in details. The idea of structure is not new in history.

There is a perennial debate in history whether the human is a mere victim of the social structure rather than its creator. Structure vs. human agency. What is interesting in this context, is the conception of the structure by Braudel. For him, the real structure of the social relationship is the environment. He states that 'man is the prisoner of the environment and mental framework'. He emphasizes the role of geography in the making of human history. It has two levels; 1) the geographical features have their own history, 2) the geographical features are influencing social history. The interaction of humans with their environment constitutes the Braudelian structure. The bedrock of history is 'geo-history'. He is indebted to Vidal de la Blache and Febvre for this theoretical stand.

Braudel lavishly employed this concept and analyzed the geographical/environmental characteristics of the Mediterranean region during the sixteenth century. Such a spatial idea demands a new perception of time. History is all about change. You know that geographical/environmental formations change very slowly. Hence, the time frame Braudel suggests is *longue durée* which means long term. What he asks historians is to consider long and gradual changes in their historical narratives. Without the analysis of human-environment structure, no history could be total. In other words, the structure should be the base of every historical analysis. The time conception of *longue durée* is liberating for it changed the scope of historical writing radically. The historians began to think about larger time frames of change. *Longue durée* is geographical time in Braudel's analysis.



♦ *The second level is conjuncture*

The second level is conjuncture. At this point, the historian enters into a new space-time paradigm. In conjuncture, the economic and social changes come for historians' scrutiny. This change is neither too slow nor too fast. It's a gradual medium-pace change that the contemporaries may leave even without noticing. The space, here, is society and economy and the time frame is social time. The evolution of feudalism is an example of conjuncture. It has had a history of four centuries and the people who lived in those years might not have been aware of the fact that they are living in a social-economic system called feudalism. Feudalism is a historical terminology used to indicate the common patterns of social life at a given point in history. The second part of *The Mediterranean* deals with the gradual changes in socio-economic terrains of sixteenth-century Mediterranean society.

♦ *Narrating individuals and events*

Then, comes the third part--events. At this point, Braudel enters into the domain of traditional historiography of narrating individuals and events. In his strive for the structure of social life, he almost neglects the importance of events and individuals in history. Once he described events as illuminations. 'Beyond their glow, darkness prevails'. At this level, the space is either an event or an individual. He reaches to a time frame more familiar to us (and to the historians at that period); the individual time. For events are momentary eruptions, they won't last for long. It is visible and experiential. Hitler's biography or the fall of the Berlin wall is an example of an individual or event-based history. According to Braudel, this kind of narrative is incomplete. We don't understand anything from such a narrative. The individual event should be placed in conjuncture (socio-economy) which is embedded in the larger structure of geography/ environment. It is only in this framework a total life of the past becomes possible. The events devoid of conjuncture and structure are illuminations. Beyond them, there is the darkness of ignorance.

3.1.1.2 Jacques Le Goff and the Third Generation

In 1972, the presidency of the Sixth Section was handed over to Jacques Le Goff, a disciple of Braudel. If we need an event to mark the change, this can be taken as the beginning of the third generation of the Annales movement. By this time, the journal was facing several challenges as Peter Burke metaphorically called 'the mid-life crisis' of a journal. New theories began to emerge in historical discourses. Some of

◆ *Structure: Construction of society*

◆ *Third generation was against structuralism*

them were skeptical of structuralism itself. For instance, the Foucauldian critique of structuralism. You may remember the basic idea of structuralism. Society is a large structure consisting of other autonomous structures. But, Foucault would argue that the structure per se is a construction of the society at a particular point in time. The structure is, therefore, a cultural and historical construction. The structural analysis would not bring in 'objective truth' because the structure is relative and a constructed reality in itself. Therefore, what is more important in historical analysis is the discernment of discourses - the cultural activities of constructing and representing realities - according to Foucault. The Foucauldian critique prompted the tribes of historians to revisit their theoretical and methodological practices. Braudelian structuralism was not an exemption from Foucault's critique of structural reality.

◆ *Another major criticism : the lack of a theory of change.*

The criticism of the idea of a materialist foundation of society – be that environment in Braudel or the economy in Marx – demanded to set aside the obsolete methodology and brought in new methods of analysis. The third generation, in this sense, was a response to Braudelian structuralism. Braudel, himself, realized the limitations of his model and asked the young historians to work on more diverse subjects and methods after the political unrest in France in 1968. Another major criticism levelled against the Annales at that time is the lack of a theory of change. The historical endeavor attempts to register the changes in the past. The Annales historians were good at that and they tried to mark the changes in all aspects of human life in the past.

◆ *Third generation did not follow any concrete method or style*

In a general survey, we can understand some of the recurrent topics explored by these historians. Unlike the older generation, no concrete method or style was followed by the third generation. They explored multiple themes ranging from the history of familial structures to the history of smell. It was more fragmented in nature rather than coherent as in Braudel. It appears that this group of historians is more indebted to Febvre and Bloch than their immediate intellectual master, Braudel. The history of mentalities, which is more or less absent in Braudel's work, however, is rich in Febvre and Bloch and received greater attention by this time. Why? Because the emphasis was changing in favor of the individual world rather than the materialist structures. The historians of this generation, thus, began to investigate both individual and collective psychology in the past. Politics and events also gathered momentum; the



elaboration of political events requires narrative.

3.1.2 Annales and the onset of the problem-oriented interdisciplinary method

The problem-oriented, interdisciplinary, comparative style of Bloch matured in his comprehensive study on feudalism, which was published in two volumes under the title “The Feudal Society.” Surely, you are aware of feudalism. In European history, the period between CE 900-1300 is considered a feudal age when land became the primary factor of production and social relations evolved into two major classes: feudal lord and serf. As a medievalist, Bloch could not have avoided the curiosity of studying feudalism. However, what we find here is the problem-oriented selection of the subject. Bloch did not want to study the period of a particular king or an incident that happened during this period. He was interested in a larger problem of the society of the period, that is, feudalism. How did it emerge? How did it function? What were the beliefs of people at that time? How did they perceive their life and the world around them? What contributed to the continuity of feudalism as a system? What was ‘feudal culture’? How does European feudalism differ from the feudalism of other regions? These are some of the questions that Bloch sought to answer.

♦ The foundation was laid down during the radical phase

The Feudal Society, as the title of the book suggests, was his ‘problem.’ The research revolved around it. *The Feudal Society* is a ‘total study’ on feudalism. You may recall what total history is. It is not the history of everything. By total history, Bloch and his colleagues in the Annales conceive a history that leaves nothing behind while analyzing society. No aspect, whether human or non-human, is outside the scope of historical analysis. Bloch’s study of feudal society exemplified this approach. It was not solely an economic analysis of serfdom, the system of exploitation in feudalism. Bloch went beyond. He wrote about the feudal mentality, the ‘modes of feeling and thought’ in the feudal system. He analyzed socio-psychological, religious, and cultural aspects of the system. Insights from sociology, economics, anthropology, and psychology were called upon for this comprehensive analysis. This was the revolution that Febvre and Bloch sought to achieve through the journal of the Annales – the total history of a problem by incorporating knowledge from other disciplines.

♦ The second generation
♦ associated with other social science disciplines

♦ *Comparative method by Bloch*

This does not mean that Bloch confined himself to the 'total history' of feudalism in France. He duly considered the characteristics of the regions all around. He also drew on insights from various sources to examine the complexities of feudalism in France. In the second stage, he compared French feudalism to Japan, which may surprise you when considering the scope of his scholarship. The comparison with a non-European society reflected Bloch's conviction regarding the effectiveness of the comparative method.

♦ *Bloch analyzed the impersonal social system of feudalism.*

The book is classical in many aspects. It was a well-constructed historical work that used Durkheimian sociology. Durkheim's understanding of present society was extended to the analysis of societies in different periods. We cannot find human beings, their lives, individual convictions, etc. in feudal society. The individual is obscured by social systems. Durkheimian sociology demanded placing the individual within the social context. The individual is the form, and society is the content. However, in the application, only the content remained. Bloch analyzed the impersonal social system of feudalism. We may not find an actual relationship between a feudal lord and their tenants or the everyday life of a tenant in Bloch's total history of feudalism.

♦ *Left behind groundbreaking works in modern history and inspired generations of historians.*

3.1.3 March Bloch

When Marc Bloch was executed by the Nazi Germans in 1944, his French nation was under Nazi occupation, against which Bloch had been resisting. He was a historian who resisted domination both politically and intellectually. He resisted Nazi ideology politically and the individualistic, political narrative of history intellectually. In his two decades of academic life, Bloch left behind groundbreaking works in modern history and a legacy that inspired generations of historians. He was the driving force behind the idea of the *Annales*.

Bloch commenced his academic career by studying a specific region. Choosing a research area necessitates new methods and approaches. What are the historiographical advantages of studying a region? Imagine yourself as a historian of your village. You would have access to diverse sources that allow you to construct a comprehensive narrative of a small area. These sources are enriched by the lived experiences of ordinary people. As a result, your narration cannot be limited to a single aspect of social life; it requires a holistic approach. You would be compelled to draw



◆ *History of the common people*

insights from other disciplines to comprehend the sources available to you. The social world of the village becomes your research problem, rather than focusing on a particular incident or individual within the village. By following this path, you would become an Annales historian! The study of regions enabled Bloch to question many traditional historical practices. The concept of a region facilitates simultaneous and nuanced analysis.

◆ *Rural history: The combined study of rural techniques and rural customs*

In 1931, he published a book titled *French Rural History*, in which he defines rural history as “the combined study of rural techniques and rural customs.” What was innovative was his utilization of non-literary sources such as maps and oral accounts. There is also a methodological peculiarity involved. Bloch employed a regressive method of writing history, moving backward from the known to the unknown. Although F.W. Maitland is the pioneer of this method, Bloch demonstrated to the academic world how to employ it in a comprehensive and detailed manner. Interestingly, many of these features have become standardized practices in what we now refer to as local history.

◆ *The Royal Touch*

The Royal Touch was an early work of Bloch written in 1924, manifesting the historiographical stance of the author on the comparative method and collective psychology. During the medieval period, there was a belief in France that being touched by the king could heal scrofula and related diseases. “The Royal Touch” explains the psychological and political aspects of this gesture. You might notice that the subject matter of this work is kingship – that is, political – an area which finds little mention in the heyday of the Annales Movement. However, *The Royal Touch* marked a departure from traditional political history by incorporating collective psychology. The work had also been a contribution to religious psychology. One could not find such a psychological analysis of belief in a historical work of the early 1920s. Marc Bloch discussed the concept of collective illusion and its role in the perpetuity of political authority. Political dominance has a psychological aspect as well. It was Bloch who urged historians to analyze the collective mentalities behind political power. In this sense, *The Royal Touch* has been a pioneering study in the history of mentalities. The collective consciousness that Bloch explains in this work represents a mental formation that appears unfathomable for a person of modern rationality.

The Royal Touch also showcases Bloch’s conviction on the comparative method. The comparative method is a distinctive method prominent in social science. You may compare a train and

♦ **Comparative
Method**

a bus to find out their similarities and differences. It is used to compare different social formations and their peculiarities. Marc Bloch borrowed this method and made a comparison of the idea of kingship in France and England during the medieval period. Bloch was a proponent of the comparative method, which he further utilized in his later work, *The Feudal Society*, by comparing feudal social formations. *Towards a Comparative History of European Societies*, an article written by Bloch in 1928, elaborated on the possibilities of the comparative method in history. Comparing different societies of adjacent regions and remote areas would contribute to the broader generalization of human history, Bloch argued.

Summarised Overview

The Annales school emphasized the importance of studying the long-term structures and processes of society, as well as the social and economic factors that influence political and cultural events. The school was founded by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, who sought to challenge the traditional focus on political and military history in favor of a more interdisciplinary and holistic approach to historical study.

Marc Bloch was a prominent figure in the Annales School, and his contributions to the study of feudalism and medieval society were instrumental in highlighting the significance of social and economic history within the field of historical scholarship. Bloch posited that feudalism was distinguished by intricate social relationships and responsibilities, asserting that comprehending these relationships was essential to grasping the political and economic framework of medieval society. Bloch's work played a pivotal role in redirecting historical scholarship towards an interdisciplinary approach that prioritized the examination of social and economic structures over singular events or epochs.

The emergence of the problem-oriented interdisciplinary method was a crucial advancement in historical scholarship, occurring in the mid-20th century. This approach stressed the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration and the utilization of various research methods to examine intricate historical issues. The method drew substantial inspiration from the Annales School's work, along with other social science disciplines like sociology and anthropology. Presently, the problem-oriented interdisciplinary method remains a substantial approach in historical scholarship, contributing to the development of a more comprehensive and nuanced comprehension of historical events and processes.

Self Assessment

1. What were the main principles of the Annales School of history, and how did it differ from traditional approaches to historical scholarship?
2. How did Marc Bloch's work on feudalism contribute to the development of the Annales School?
3. How did the Annales School influence the development of interdisciplinary research methods?

Assignments

1. Discuss the main principles of the Annales School of history and explain why this approach was considered revolutionary in the field of historical scholarship.
2. Explain with examples on how interdisciplinary research has contributed to a better understanding of historical events and processes.

Suggested Readings

1. Andre Burguiere, *The Annales School: An Intellectual History*, Cornell University Press, 2009.
2. Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory*, New York University Press, 1999.

References

1. Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929-89*, Polity Press, 1990.
2. Ed. Stuart Clark, *The Annales School: Critical Assessment*, vol 1, Routledge, 1999.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Varieties in History

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the historical context of new trends in historical writing
- ◆ familiarise with the larger theoretical debates that shaped the new historiography
- ◆ analyse the basic features of the new trends
- ◆ learn about the main historians and their major works on the new forms of historical writing

Background

In the previous chapters, we discussed the Annales movement and its novel imaginings of historical reconstruction. The historiographical experiments of the Annales movement had a significant impact on the study of the past, as they raised new questions, explored fresh sources, and developed innovative approaches. Building upon the insights from this tradition, post-Second World War Europe witnessed the emergence of various historiographical trends that enriched our understanding of the past while sharpening our perceptions of historical knowledge. The ordinary people and their life experiences found their place in the historical narrative. These trends primarily resisted the structuralist, large-scale explanations of past societies. It is argued that what has been missing in such narratives is human agency – the role of humans in shaping history. Therefore, the new trends in historiography aimed to breathe life into historical narratives, emphasizing human agency over social structure. This chapter examines some of the significant approaches that emerged in the post-Second World War period.

Keywords

Cultural turn, Marginalisation, Democratisation of History, Sex and Gender, Grand Narratives.



Discussion

3.2.1 Cultural History

What comes to mind when you hear the word culture? Arts, literature, movies...? Of course. Those are cultural activities. But is there anything else? Culture was previously defined in such a way that activities related to the realm of arts and literature constituted culture. However, this definition was excessively limited in scope. As a result of prolonged debates among scholars, the word culture acquired a new definition in the latter half of the twentieth century. Culture came to be defined as a way of life in a particular society. Due to its broader usage in common language, culture, as Raymond Williams states, is the most challenging concept in English to define. The fluidity of its meaning makes this word complex. It has been employed in various senses. It is within this chaotic realm that cultural history emerged in the 1970s. Cultural history is one of the recent developments in historiography and has been the outcome of long-standing intellectual debates within Western academia. Cultural history focuses on the cultural transformations within society. Once again, the definition of the word culture poses a problem. What is meant by culture or cultural changes? The answer to this question indicates the evolving domains of cultural history.

♦ *The word culture is fluid*

♦ *Deals with the cultural changes in a society*

3.2.1.1 Language and Culture

As we have observed previously, history from below has been an addition to social history. Social history held dominance over other forms of historical narrative during that period. The New Cultural History emerged as a response to the crisis of social history. The major debate among historians at that time revolved around the role of structure and human agency in determining the course of social life. Structuralism prioritized impersonal social structures like class, nation, etc., in their social perception. Humans are, to a great extent, victims of social structure. Therefore, historians need to acknowledge changes in the social structure over time. However, this theoretical standpoint overshadowed the importance of human will. If humans are mere victims of social structure, then what brings about change in the structure? Historians like E.P. Thomson attempted to integrate human agency with social structure, yet it raised numerous new questions. The methodology of social history

♦ *Structuralism prioritized class and nation*



also faced severe criticism. The quantitative method held the upper hand in historical research.

♦ *Rejected the hypothesis of structural linguistics*

One may recall the Annales historians' endeavor to integrate the quantitative method even into the history of mentalities, where they aimed to measure changing trends in religious faith. What are your thoughts? Can culture be measured? Can we measure thoughts, feelings, dreams, etc.? Reducing human life to quantifiable categories invited strong criticism from cultural theorists and practitioners of the new cultural history. Additionally, the theoretical dominance of structuralism faced challenges from various philosophical and theoretical movements. Postmodernism and post-structuralism criticized the historical preoccupation with structural analysis. For instance, post-structuralism rejected the hypothesis of structural linguistics, which equates language with the development of society, arguing that the structure of language is governed by society.

♦ *Meaning of language is not fixed*

♦ *Changes in language influence by culture*

On the contrary, social structures are created by language, and meaning is derived from this structure. Post-structuralists criticized this argument, contending that meaning is diverse, with one word potentially having different meanings in different contexts. Hence, meaning is determined by the context, not by a fixed social structure. What is your understanding of this argument? If society is like language, understanding the functioning of language becomes important to comprehend society. Language provides meaning to words, actions, possessions, persons, etc. However, according to post-structuralists, the meaning of language is not fixed; it changes. Consequently, similar to the changes in the meaning of language, there is hardly any fixed social structure or reality. It is constantly changing, with these changes being influenced by culture, the specific way of life in a society.

Thus, understanding culture is the key to understanding society. Consequently, the social history that focuses on social structure is challenged. Society, as a concept, does not exist; what remains are cultures. For instance, the religious rituals of one community may not be comprehensible to another community due to the distinct cultures of those communities. Society is replaced by culture. This shift in social science is generally referred to as the cultural turn. The cultural turn prompted social historians to realign their priorities in favor of cultural analysis or the analysis of culture. The crisis of Marxist social theory also contributed to a distinct form of

- ◆ *Society is replaced by culture*
- ◆ *This shift is called cultural turn*

cultural history. The base-superstructure model of society in classical Marxism views economic activities as the foundation of society, with culture serving as the superstructure built upon this economic base. This mechanistic conception of culture was challenged from within. Marxist intellectuals like Antonio Gramsci introduced the concept of hegemony to signify a more dynamic and interactive relationship between the economy and culture. Cultural historians have also drawn inspiration from what is now known as Cultural Marxism.

3.2.1.2 The anthropological idea of culture

- ◆ *Historians analysed symbolic practices and their cultural values*

History from below initiated popular cultural analysis in historical writing. It compelled historians to draw from anthropology, the academic discipline emphasizing human culture. The anthropological concept of culture and its methodology altered the course of historians. Anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz, Levi-Strauss, Marcel Mauss, etc., influenced historians' understanding of culture. This shift towards anthropology is known as historical anthropology. An exemplary demonstration of historical anthropology can be found in Ladurie's *Montaillou*. Alongside the linguistic principles of post-structuralism, the anthropological turn in history encouraged historians to analyze symbolic practices and their cultural values within societies. The anthropological studies of various social formations served as models for these analyses. The use of anthropology is connected to the historians' need to link culture with society. For them, culture surpasses being a mere reflection of the economic base, as perceived by classical Marxists.

- ◆ *culture is not only an addition but also a compositing factor of society*

It's worth noting that social historians spearheaded this movement in their endeavor to analyze societal complexities, which marks a departure from popular culture analysis. In popular culture, cultural activities are perceived as supplements to society, acknowledging the significance of folk culture or the culture of marginalized people in society's formation. However, cultural historians don't view culture as an addition to society but as an integral component of society. Society represents the people's way of life, and culture determines this way of life. Hence, cultural history represents the new form of social history.

In the origin and evolution of cultural history, the postmodern disbelief in "grand narratives" also played an important role. The postmodern theory is skeptical of grand



♦ *Is critical of grand narratives*

narratives such as the working class, capitalism, imperialism, nation-state, etc. All these narratives are constructions of modernity. These are the categories constructed by the modern knowledge system. For the postmodernists, knowledge is not power-neutral. The powerful in society decide knowledge and its narratives. As a critique of modern knowledge and its powerful institutions, postmodernists propose “little narratives” instead of grand narratives. For example, consider a book about the history of India and the history of your village. Which is the grand narrative? Of course, the former one. What is the problem you find with the grand narrative? It fails to include the history of common people and their experiences. On the other hand, the little narratives, like the history of our village, or regions, or the history of a local community, may reveal a different picture of history narrated grandly.

♦ *Little narratives can elaborate micro elements of history*

The cultural life of people gets much more space in the little narrative than in the grand narrative. It also marks the shift from structure to culture. The grand narratives, due to their inherent style, describe social structures. Conversely, the little narratives can elaborate on microelements of historical events. It also analyzes the symbolic practices of how meaning is created, communicated, and preserved in local communities. The little narratives, therefore, are a critique of the modern knowledge system and its modalities. Historians of culture found this formulation interesting.

3.2.1.3 New Cultural History

♦ *‘The cultural turn’ influenced history as well*

♦ *The word “society” was being replaced with “culture”*

‘The cultural turn’ that occurred in social science in the 1970s extended its influence to history as well. The word “society” was being replaced with “culture” in academia as well as common parlance. Cultural studies, an interdisciplinary discipline that emerged at this time, was also influential in cultural history. Ladurie and Roche in France, Natalie Zemon Davis in the US, Carlo Ginzburg in Italy, Alf Lüdtkke and Hans Medick in Germany were pioneers in this field. British Marxist historians, mainly from the New Left, responded to cultural history with their own theoretical and methodological frameworks, such as Cultural Marxism. Cultural theories began to be integrated into historical analysis. Historians borrowed theories and methods from literary studies, art studies, history of science, etc.

The New Cultural History paradigm, developed in the US by the 1980s, was more interested in issues of representation

♦ *The New Cultural History paradigm interested in the issues of representations and practices*

and practices. These two emphases on representation and practices have been fundamental. Culture is a practice. It is dynamic and ever-changing. The practices and performances practiced in society indicate the way of life, which is the culture that constitutes the society. Through the analysis of social practices, historians reveal the values and rules of the cultural organization of society in the past. The dynamic nature of culture enables historians to record changes. It is within the framework of practice and performance that the question of representation arises. Who is represented in the social narrative? What are the issues of misrepresentation or non-representation? The lack of representation is a part of cultural politics. Consider our cultural representations in movies. Take the hero-villain representation, both of them have certain fixed characteristics that we call stereotypes. Through these stereotypes, which are repetitive representations, a symbolic identity is formed, and such a formulation leads to social tensions. Therefore, practices and representations are fundamental to the historical analysis of cultural history.

♦ *The biggest challenge: the way art forms emerged and evolved*

The classical texts and art forms have been the subject of historians who were interested in the “cultural” history. By the 1930s, the scope extended to the social history of arts and literature. For instance, the social factors behind the origin of Kathakali became a matter of inquiry. The changes that occurred in Kathakali are attributed to the wider changes in society. The biggest challenge for historians working on cultural history until that point was the way art forms emerged and evolved over time. Nevertheless, a major shift came about with the introduction of history from below. The culture of the people gained significant importance in this paradigm. This happened because historians needed to explore the history of marginalized and common people, and had to bring in new sources since the existing ones reflected the world of the dominant. This situation necessitated the search for securing historical information from sources such as memory, folk traditions, dreams, etc.

The art and literature of the common people were not only sources of history but also provided scope for further research. Popular culture, which includes the cultural forms of the people, enriched the scope of cultural history that had been practiced thus far. The study of Jazz music by Eric Hobsbawm is an example of popular culture history. However, there is a problem. History from below is interested in people’s history and their culture. But who



- ◆ *History from below : people's history and their culture*
- ◆ *Culture has become synonymous with society*

are the people? How would you define the term people? Not all non-elites can be taken as a category for historical analysis because it has not been homogeneous. The world of the people is diverse. So how can we write the history and culture of these diverse groups into a single narrative? In the popular definition of people, the elites are excluded. Historically, it has been proven that the elites interact with the non-elites, and they both influence each other. For instance, the reading of inexpensive novels. In the popular culture framework, this is exclusively seen as a reading habit of the common people. However, studies show that elites too shared a fondness for inexpensive novels. How can this be explained in the popular culture paradigm? This limitation in conception has necessitated a more inclusive definition of culture. Considering culture as a way of life has opened up new doors for historians to explore the past. Culture has become synonymous with society. New Cultural History emerged in this context.

- ◆ *History from below : people's history and their culture*
- ◆ *Culture has become synonymous with society*

Cultural history reveals a vast horizon to historians. Since culture encompasses all aspects of social life, every facet of society piques the historian's curiosity. Thus, cultural history opens up new realms of research, including the history of food, the history of colour, the history of clothing, the history of emotions, and the history of the body and sexuality. Over time, cultural history has undergone a linguistic shift, embracing psychoanalytic theory and newer approaches such as communication theory and network theory. It should not be regarded merely as a subset of historiography but rather as a fresh understanding of social interactions in the past.

3.2.2 History From Below

What is history? History is a study of the past. We explore the past through historical narratives. Who is the observer? The historian. They examine the sources and present us with 'what really happened.' However, there are some issues with this approach. Can you guess? There are primarily two problems.

- ◆ *Problems: History is subjective and reflects dominant world view*

1) The historian is an individual situated in a specific space and time. Consequently, their perspective is subjective and influenced by various social factors.

2) The nature of the sources is also problematic. Written sources hold great importance for historians. Yet, most of these sources have been created and preserved by those

in authority. These sources reflect the worldview of the dominant.

◆ *History from below: History of the marginalized*

Therefore, history based on these sources would provide the powerful's perspectives on the past. This is a top-down history, as it examines history from the viewpoints of the dominant in a hierarchical society. However, it is only part of the story. Where is the perspective of the majority who make up the lower rungs of the social ladder? Is it possible to write the history of marginalized communities? Do the marginalized have a history? These are the questions that historians who align themselves with the marginalized must address. This historiographical approach is known as History from below.

◆ *History from Below is inclusive*

◆ *the concept of people are central to this approach*

History from Below is an inclusive term. This approach is also referred to as grassroots history or people's history. As mentioned earlier, it is an effort to read or re-examine the past from the standpoint of marginalized and powerless individuals. It is from this vantage point that historians analyze the sources and present the history of marginalized groups. To trace the origins of history from below, we need to delve into the concept of people, as people are central to this approach. The 'discovery' of people has been a modern development. What does this imply? Were there hardly any people in the pre-modern era? The term "people" does not merely refer to the population here. Instead, it is a political category. The common people gained political and economic significance by the eighteenth century. Let's recall the historical changes that occurred in eighteenth-century Europe. One direct clue is the rise and spread of modern democracy. Each person's vote counts in a democracy. It is a system of governance established by a collective called the people. The people hold power and, through consensus, delegate it to a government led by their representatives. The concept of the rule of law, one vote one value, and so on further reinforced the notion of people.

◆ *The rational individual: foundation of modern democracy and capitalism*

The market also played a decisive role. During the industrial revolution, when mass production for the masses became the standard practice, each individual was treated as a potential customer. The rational individual capable of making informed choices forms the theoretical foundation of modern democracy and capitalism. The collective of such individuals constitutes the people in the liberal tradition. Historical forces such as secularism and urbanization also contributed to the recognition of people.



3.2.3 Gender History

♦ *Need to re-evaluate prevailing knowledge*

Gender is a frequently used category in social science. You have undoubtedly encountered this term in scholarly and general readings. Does gender have a history? Yes, it does. The utilization of gender as a historical category resulted in the emergence of gender history. It has been an endeavor to reevaluate the prevailing knowledge of the past and to envision the process through which such knowledge has been generated. Let us first explore the origins of gender history and then proceed to the theoretical changes that shaped the concept of gender as a historical category.

♦ *Women's history and gender history are interconnected*

♦ *Gender history differs from Women's history in many areas*

Gender history has a precursor with a different designation: Women's history. Are they the same? No, they are not. Women's history and gender history are interconnected. However, the theory, methodology, and scope of gender history differ from those of Women's history in various aspects. Understanding this distinction is essential to comprehend the historical developments in both disciplines. Women's history emerged as a result of the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1970s. Europe and the US were the cradle of Women's history and second-wave feminism. Consequently, this history bears the weight of being an activist history due to its close association with the feminist movement. The civil rights and anti-war movements in the 1960s garnered significant support, particularly from the youth.

3.2.3.1 Women's History

During the progress of these movements, a group of women brought attention to an issue that had thus far gone unnoticed. The leadership always revolved around men, relegating women to 'secondary' participants in the movement. This observation served as the initial catalyst for a series of political and intellectual movements aimed at achieving gender equality and justice. Women's study groups gradually emerged in various parts of the USA and Europe. Notably, consciousness-raising groups played a significant role among them. In these groups, women came together and shared their life experiences, realizing that the issues they faced were common and rooted in the subordinate position of women in society. These discussions enabled them to establish their identity as women and encouraged them to attain full personhood. In this context,

◆ *Women realised that the issues they faced were common*

◆ *Rooted in their subordinate position in society*

◆ *Academic world was male-centered,*

◆ *The university system was skeptical of women's history*

◆ *Early feminist movement: emancipate women from the realm of domesticity*

◆ *Women's history confronted male-biased nature of historiography*

the need for a historical perspective became evident. History is considered one of the sources of identity formation in modern perception. Consequently, writing the history of women becomes imperative in order to establish women's role in the past and affirm their identity in the present. In short, Women's history in the 1970s was a political project of the feminist movement.

How could someone document people's history or grassroots history without acknowledging the condition of women? Women constitute half of the population and endure exploitation within various structures of social relations. Historians from this group also participated in adult and workers' education programs. The shared experiences and discussions enriched the historians' field of experience. It is worth noting that these classes, discussions, and educational programs constituted the first institutionalized format in women's history. Initially, in Britain, the university system was skeptical of women's history, and it emerged on the fringes of the official knowledge system. Why did the universities, the official centers of knowledge production, show little interest in new endeavors like women's history? They failed to find any relevance in such studies because the academic world was male-centered, and they couldn't comprehend other realms of experience.

The early women's history is indicative of its intellectual and political orientation. These works were predominantly a part of labour history, sharing numerous common themes. It was within the socialist framework that the question of women's liberation was raised and attempts were made to resolve it. The focal point of the feminist movement during that time was to emancipate women from the realm of domesticity and secure them paid employment in the economy. The attainment of financial remuneration appeared to be indispensable for women's liberation, which further influenced the early inclination of women's history towards labour history. Nonetheless, women's history posed a challenge to the existing paradigm of historical writing. According to Bonnie Smith, "the professionalization of history as a discipline during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries coincided with its masculinization." We predominantly encountered the history of politics, warfare, economy, diplomacy, etc., which were essentially histories of men's work or histories as perceived by men. Women's history confronted the male-biased nature of historiography from within.



- ◆ *Women's history fails to acknowledge the experiences of black women*
- ◆ *Gender becomes relevant within this context*

What is lacking in women's history? You can contemplate. Let us frame the question differently. If there exists women's history, then what are the other forms of history? We can designate a portion of history as women's history and the remainder as the general history of humankind. Therein lies the predicament. Women's history, in this case, runs parallel to "real" history or general history and does it impact the predominant nature of historical knowledge. Another issue is the essentialisation of the category of women. It is women's history. Who are the women in history? Can we utilize the term women as an all-encompassing category? These queries emerged from the periphery of the periphery. The experiences and identities of black women would differ from those of white women. This is the principal question raised by black women regarding consciousness-raising groups. Those were the experiences of white middle-class women, and women's history fails to acknowledge the experiences of black women. The practitioners confined the scope of women to white women. Women from black and other marginalized communities were neglected. Thus, the limitations of women as a category and women's history as a form of knowledge were exposed. Women's history cannot be comprehended in isolation. Such identities are the outcome of a complex social process that encompasses class, nation, race, and so forth. This tumult in women's history prompted historians to introduce a new conceptual category. Gender becomes relevant in historical analysis within this context.

3.2.3.2 Understanding Gender

- ◆ *Gender : Broader and more inclusive category than women*
- ◆ *Sex is biological, gender is cultural and historical*

Gender is a broader and more inclusive category than women because it encompasses various gender identities and relationships within its scope. This makes it particularly useful for historians. To comprehend its significance, we must examine the socially constructed nature of gender. Sex and gender are distinct concepts: sex is biological, while gender is cultural and historical. Gender identity is assigned to individuals based on their sexed bodies, and it varies across different societies and time periods. Laura Lee Down asserts that not all individuals assigned female at birth share the same gender identity. Consequently, gender is a socially constructed distinction related to sexuality and plays a significant role in shaping one's identity. Society expects individuals to conform to gender roles associated with their sexed bodies. Femininity and masculinity are integral aspects of gender identity and influence power dynamics within society. In contrast to the category of women, which largely augmented existing knowledge systems, the concept of gender revolutionized our understanding of society and history. Gender history focuses on examining how femininity and masculinity are constructed, how they acquire meaning, and why they undergo

changes over time. Introducing gender as a conceptual category in historical analysis accomplishes two goals:

1) It unveils the constructed nature of gender identity.

2) It reveals how gender relations constitute the foundations of social interactions.

Feminist Approach

The early practitioners of gender history were feminist historians. They were social historians in the broader sense of the term. Two trends were relevant in the early years.

1) Socialist-feminist approach. It emerged from the New Left movement and was widely practiced in countries like Britain. They examined history by combining two social categories: gender and class. The bourgeois nature of patriarchy was revealed through these studies. The analysis focused on the materialistic perspective of gender inequality. However, they were criticized for giving more importance to socialism than to patriarchy.

♦ *Socialist-feminist approach: Materialistic perspective of gender inequality*

♦ *Radical feminists: Patriarchy as the major challenge*

(2) Radical feminists. These were historians from the US. They adopted the spatial division advocated by the radical feminist movement. Radical feminists considered patriarchy as the major challenge and rejected the idea of entering the men's world on equal terms. Instead, they created exclusive spheres for women as an alternative to patriarchy.

It is within these spaces that they celebrated women's power and sisterhood. The stance of radical feminists encouraged historians to explore patriarchy in the past and how gendered binaries such as nature/culture, private/public, female/male, etc., operated in society. The argument in favor of separate women's spheres invited criticism. It romanticises women's power and sociability while neglecting the larger networks through which power operates. It is an attempt to replace the emphasis on male dominance with female autonomy. Critics argue that the gendered separation of the social sphere is a bourgeois male conception of the nineteenth century. The radical feminist historians fall into the same trap. However, by the second half of the 1980s, the focus of gender historians shifted from social to cultural analysis. This marked a 'cultural turn' in gender history.

♦ *Gendered separation of the social sphere is a bourgeois male conception*

Cultural turn

The fundamental assumption of gender, as discussed previously,



♦ *Cultural turn:
Social to cultural
analysis of femi-
nism*

is that gender is a cultural construct based on distinctions between sexes. It has been a foundational aspect of social relationships. However, how has it been constructed? The significance of cultural analysis in the formation of gender identities lies here. The 'cultural turn' in gender history can be attributed to numerous theoretical advancements of the era. Post-modern and post-structuralist theories had challenged the fundamental assumptions of social history. Historical writings transitioned from being influenced by social science to adopting a literary paradigm. Social relationships began to be viewed as a linguistic system. It has been a process of creating meaning. In other words, social relations are made possible through communication. Language is utilized for communication, and we ascribe meaning to words and sentences used in this process, which establishes social relations.

♦ *The 'cultural
turn' in gen-
der history :
Post-modern and
post-structuralist
theories*

The process of creating meaning is not fixed; it is constantly evolving. Social relations and the associated meanings are not static. For example, gender is a social relationship based on sex differences. Femininity and masculinity are two significant constitutive elements of gender. What do femininity and masculinity mean? We cannot provide a stable meaning or definition because the meaning is always changing and it changes through discourses, which reflect how language is used in society. Here, gender history incorporates discourse analysis to comprehend the meanings attributed to gender and the process by which they change. The historian is primarily interested in exploring the cultural practices that represent the prevailing meanings in society, rather than excavating the objective social conditions of gender. The 'cultural turn' in gender history was part of a broader epistemological shift in the social science discipline.

Gender constitutes and is constituted by social hierarchies. Hierarchies are unequal positions in a system. Gender history, in turn, was concerned with the power hierarchy that exists between gender identities. The meaning/knowledge created by cultural discourse has not been devoid of power. Power disseminates through these discourses and makes social relations unequal. The postmodern paradigm of knowledge-power relations penetrated the thematic settings of gender history. For instance, European colonialism was analyzed from a gender perspective. Europe was presented as men and colonized as women. The power relations between the colonizer and the colonized are firmly established by this discourse. The condition of women has been depicted as the marker of civilizational progress. Post-colonial gender historians show the colonial practices by which the notion of gender was circulated both in the metropolis and in colonies. However, the discursive approach forged against

♦ *primarily interested in exploring the cultural practices*

♦ *Part of broader shift in social science*

the fixity of structuralism, in due course, lost its rigor due to its inability to explain the changes in gender relations. Within the framework of discourse analysis, Judith Butler introduced a dynamic perception by articulating that gender is a performance based on a culturally given script. This approach looks inward to individuals and how they perform gender roles learned from the institutions of culture.

Then comes the next question. What is the stage of this performance? What do we use for the performance? The site of gender performance is the mind and body. Since Michel Foucault, the body has become a major area of social science research. Through different mechanisms, the body is defined and regulated historically. The concern over the body led to the exploration of bodily experiences, including sexuality. The fluidity of human sexuality and its conceptual introduction to gender expanded the scope of gender as an analytical category. The queer questions emerged in gender history. The history of sexuality becomes a decisive point of investigation. The 'cultural turn' and subsequent developments raise new questions for historians and ask for new sources and methods different from earlier political and social paradigms. As an analytical category, gender expands the horizon of the historian and radically alters our understanding of the past.

♦ *Hierarchies are unequal positions in society*

♦ *The condition of women: Marker of civilizational progress*

♦ *Foucault made the body a major area of social science research*

3.3.4 History of Slavery

You may be familiar with the concept of slavery through different forms of media, such as movies and novels. A well-crafted film to consider is *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013), which depicts a true event in the history of American slavery. What comes to mind when you hear the word slavery? Perhaps an image of a black person? That is understandable, as many popular cultural representations focus on the Atlantic slavery that occurred between Africa and America in the sixteenth century. However, slavery has a long-standing tradition in the history of humanity and existed in various forms in numerous societies.

3.3.4.1 Historiographical Significance

The historiographical interest in different aspects of slavery is relatively recent. Karl Marx identified slavery as a mode of production in the Greco-Roman period, a way of organizing society. Nevertheless, even Marxist historians initially paid little attention to the formation of slave societies. The existing studies, albeit limited in number, primarily focused on the Atlantic slave



trade. The historical significance of slavery gained attention during the era of social history after the Second World War. Historians' inclination towards marginalized, previously unheard, or overlooked communities encouraged the exploration of the history of slavery. The broader paradigm of "history from below" was employed for this purpose.

◆ *Historians' inclination towards marginalized: Exploration of the history of slavery*

In the 1960s, the Civil Rights movement in the United States problematized the concept of race. The African-American community, as a less privileged group, became the focal point of research within the "history from below" school in the US. The utilization of race as a category of historical analysis prompted historians to examine its origins. Consequently, there has been a growing body of literature on the history of slavery. In addition to class, nation, and gender, race has become a prominent category in historical research. However, the history of slavery surpasses the traditional perception of race and incorporates various forms of slavery and associated practices that existed in different societies.

◆ *Race as a category of historical analysis prompted historians to examine its origins.*

Slavery has been depicted from the owner's perspective in early works. For example, let's consider the works of Ulrich B. Philip. He argues for the 'positive' aspects of slavery. The slave system provided new opportunities for slaves who would otherwise be confined to their 'limited' socio-cultural environment. Slavery Christianized, educated, and emancipated the slaves from 'barbarism'. The relationship between slave and master was often cordial, contrary to the view that the master exploits the slave. The slavery apologists, in this way, highlight the beneficial aspects that the slaves derived from the institution of slavery. Conversely, a trend emerged in historiography that examined slavery from the slave's perspective. Generally, this approach had an institutional focus, perceiving slavery as a social institution that perpetuated domination and subordination. Two works are particularly important in understanding slavery as a social institution: *Slavery and Social Death* by Orlando Patterson and *Anthropology of Slavery* by Meillassoux. According to Patterson, slavery represents the social death of an individual. It entails the objectification of slaves, stripping them of their humanity.

The dignity and status of human beings are nullified for a slave. A slave is considered the property of the master and can be bought or sold at the master's discretion. An important point made by Patterson is that a slave can be seen as a physical and ideological extension of the owner, lacking

◆ *Slavery and Social Death and Anthropology of Slavery*

a distinct self. This implies that the slave is not a separate entity from the master. According to Patterson, this absence of selfhood leads to a crisis and, consequently, social death. Due to their lack of selfhood, slaves cannot be part of society; they are isolated from social relationships and reduced to the status of objects. Patterson sees social death as the most brutal aspect of slavery as an institution. In his analysis of how social deaths occur, Patterson introduces the concept of natal alienation. Natal alienation involves the severing of ties to kinship, culture, religion, and other social practices that connect an individual to their own community.

◆ *A slave is considered the property of the master*

◆ *Slave has no distinct identity*

◆ *Results in social death*

The displacement of African people from their tribes or lands serves as an example of natal alienation, leading to the social death of enslaved individuals. Meillassoux similarly argues that the institution of slavery disrupts kin-based economies and social lives. However, those uprooted from their own social lives are not integrated into the social world of their owners. As a result, slaves lack supportive mechanisms and are entirely dependent on the physical and ideological needs of their owners. Patterson and Meillassoux employ a comparative method to analyze the history of slavery. They examine slavery as an institution in various societies and time periods. This comparative approach, pioneered by these scholars, continued to dominate research on the history of slavery until the 1990s. For instance, *The Journal of Slavery and Abolition*, established in 1980, adhered to the comparative method and was influential in the field. Nevertheless, the limitations of the institutionalist-comparative approach became apparent over time. Patterson and Meillassoux rely on sociological and anthropological methods rather than historical ones.

◆ *Displacement from homeland leads to natal alienation*

◆ *comparative method to analyze the history of slavery*

The comparative method has its constraints in historical research as it fails to elucidate the process of change and neglects the specificities of space and time within the society under examination. This led to the emergence of a global history approach in response to these challenges. The history of slavery began to be perceived as an integral part of global history by the 1990s. As mentioned above, this was a response to the stagnation in the study of historical slavery. Moving beyond the institutionalist approach, the global history paradigm proposes studying slavery as a dynamic process. The institutionalist emphasizes the parasitic nature of the relationship between owner and slave, in which the owner is always dominant and the slave is devoid of any agency. However, the global history approach considers



◆ *Comparative method : Neglects change*

◆ *The global history paradigm: Studying slavery as a dynamic process.*

◆ *Modern conception of freedom is connected to the history of slavery.*

◆ *What qualifies a system as slavery?*

◆ *a process of labor exploitation*

◆ *Slavery in one society would be different from the other*

◆ *Dynamic nature of slavery*

◆ *Study of slavery should be culture specific*

slavery as a dynamic process, an interaction between the slave and the owner. This shift in approach can be attributed to the broader debates in social science at that time. The agency of marginalized people found its way into historical and social analysis. Another limitation of the former scholarship is the emphasis given to slavery in America. This may have occurred because of the political context of the Civil Rights Movement in America and the availability of source materials on the Atlantic slave trade.

Global history reframed the scope of the history of slavery. In initial attempts, global historians of slavery explored the role of race and slavery in the making of the modern world. What is the opposite of slavery? Freedom. These historians argue that our modern conception of freedom is connected to the history of slavery. The abolition of slavery in America was crucial in shaping individual freedom in the modern world. This paradigm has expanded the area of study from slavery in antiquity and the slave trade in the Atlantic to various forms of slavery in other parts of the world and diverse experiences of slave-owner relationships.

The new trend raises some fundamental questions about slavery. What qualifies a system as slavery? How do the slave-owner duos work in slave societies? What are the roles of slavery in the making of the modern world? Does slavery exist today? The answers to these questions given by global historians mark a departure in the historiography of slavery. Slavery is not an institution but a process. It has been a process of labor exploitation. There are many methods to extract labor from unwilling people. These methods are called 'slave strategies'. That is, slavery is not prefixed. It evolves through time and social space. The slave strategy of one society would be different from the other. Race was used as an ideological system, as a strategy, for the perpetuation and justification of slavery in America. But the Indian experience is different. It is the caste system that served the slave strategy in India. Even the dynamics of the caste system and regional variations cannot be disowned.

As we know, there is a huge structure of religious and mythological systems behind the functioning of the caste system in India. It acts through various social rituals and practices. What is pertinent in the context of the history of slavery is the realisation of the dynamic nature of slavery. It could be achieved only when historians initiated the study of slavery in different regions in terms of their own cultural

peculiarities rather than comparing it with the 'dominant' form of Atlantic slavery.

Summarised Overview

Cultural History delves into the study of human culture, including beliefs, values, customs, practices, art, literature, and language. It seeks to understand how cultures have developed, evolved, and interacted with each other over time. Cultural historians explore myriad topics such as social rituals, artistic expressions, religious practices, and cultural identities to gain insights into past societies.

History from Below, also known as social history or people's history, aims to uncover the experiences and perspectives of ordinary people, marginalized groups, and subalterns who have often been excluded or overlooked in traditional historical narratives. This approach highlights the lives, struggles, and contributions of common individuals, workers, women, peasants, slaves, indigenous populations, and other disadvantaged groups, providing a more inclusive understanding of the past.

Gender History examines the role of gender in shaping historical events, societies, and power dynamics. It explores how concepts of masculinity and femininity, gender norms, and power relations have influenced social, economic, and political structures throughout history. Gender historians study topics such as women's rights movements, gendered divisions of labor, gender identities, sexuality, and the impact of gender on individuals' experiences and opportunities.

The History of Slavery focuses on the institution of slavery, which has existed in various forms and across different civilizations throughout history. It delves into the origins, development, and abolition of slavery, as well as its economic, social, and cultural implications. This field of study explores the experiences of enslaved individuals, slave societies, the slave trade, resistance movements, and the lasting legacies of slavery on societies and race relations.

These varieties in history offer distinct approaches and perspectives that help uncover different aspects of human experiences, cultures, and societies. By exploring these different avenues, historians can gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the past.



Self Assessment

1. Briefly explain the concept of Cultural History
2. Critically examine the History of Slavery.
3. Explain how social norms shaped Gender History.
4. Briefly explain the concept of History from Below.
5. Evaluate the the historiographical evolution of the concept of slavery.

Assignments

1. Critically analyse the different generations of the Feminist movement in relation to gender identities.
2. Examine the and its significance and evolution of cultural practices in your hometown.

Suggested Reading

1. Ed. Alf Ludtke, *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, Princeton University Press, 1995.
2. Ed. David Stefan Doddington and Enrico Dal Lago, *Writing the history of Slavery*, Bloomsbury, 2022.

References

1. Kevin Mayers and Ian Grosvenor, *Collaborative Research: History From Below*, University of Bristol and AHRC, 2018.
2. Laura Lee Downs, *Writing Gender History*, 2nd edition, Bloomsbury, 2017.
3. Ed. Marek Tamm and Peter Burke. *Debating New Approches to History*, Bloomsbury, 2019.
4. Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, Polity, 2004.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



History and Intersectionalist

BLOCK-04



Postmodern Methodologies

Learning Outcomes

After this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ identify the key principles of structuralism and post-structuralism
- ◆ analyze how these concepts have been used to understand and critique power relations related to race and gender
- ◆ evaluate the strengths and limitations of these concepts for understanding issues of race and gender
- ◆ develop a critical perspective on the ways in which these concepts can be used to challenge dominant narratives and power relations

Background

Intersectionality emerged in the 1980s and 1990s out of the feminist and anti-racist movements in the United States. The concept was first articulated by Kimberly Crenshaw, a noted legal scholar, who noted that African-American women faced unique forms of discrimination that were not adequately addressed by the existing legal framework that focused on either racism or gender-based discrimination. She argued that the intersection of race and gender created a distinct and complex experience of discrimination that could not be understood by examining these issues individually. The concept of intersectionality has since expanded to include other forms of oppression, such as age, class, disability, and sexuality. It has become an important lens for understanding how multiple forms of discrimination and privilege operate simultaneously in individuals' lives and how they intersect with systems of power and inequality in society. In terms of history, intersectionality has challenged traditional narratives that have overlooked the experiences and contributions of marginalized groups, such as women, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, and others. It has emphasized the importance of understanding the complexities and nuances of historical events and phenomena, including the ways that different forms of oppression intersect and interact. Intersectionality has been used to analyze the experiences of African-American women during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. The intersection of these forms of oppression has created unique challenges and experiences for LGBTQ+ individuals, and understanding these intersections is critical to understanding their history and experiences. In this unit we will be exploring how the debates on race and gender emerged



Keywords

Structuralism, Post-structuralism, Levi-strauss, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Historicism, Post-colonial, Edward Said

Discussion

4.1.1 Structuralism and Post Structuralism

By the 20th century, traditional forms of analyzing human behavior proved inadequate. Structuralism and post-structuralism are two closely related but distinct approaches for understanding human behavior and culture. Structuralism emerged as an avenue to understand human behavior and culture by focusing on the factors that shape and influence our experiences. Popularized by the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, it emerged in the early 20th century influencing disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, and psychology.

♦ *Emerged out of inadequacies in the study of human behaviour*

At its core, structuralism asserts that there are universal structures that shape human behavior and culture, and that these structures can be studied and understood through analysis of the relationships between the elements within a system. These structures are seen as being independent of individual experience or consciousness, and are instead seen as objective and measurable. For example, in linguistics, structuralism emphasizes the study of the underlying structures of language, such as syntax and grammar, rather than the meaning of individual words. In anthropology, structuralism focuses on the underlying structures of social and cultural systems, such as kinship, family dynamics, and marriage patterns.

♦ *Structuralism focuses on the underlying structures in society.*

Post-structuralism emerged much later in the 1960s and 1970s as a critique of structuralism. It is an approach that rejects the idea of universal structures and instead emphasizes the role of power, subjectivity, and popular discourse in shaping human behavior and culture. A key aspect of post-structuralist approaches to gender is the role of power in shaping gender dynamics. Power, within this framework is understood as being embedded within language and discourse. Power relationships are

♦ *Poststructuralism emerged as a critique of structuralism*

not static, but are instead constantly negotiated and contested by social, historical, and political contexts.

◆ *Post-structuralism emphasizes the role of discourse and power in shaping identities and relationships.*

It draws on a range of thinkers, including Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Francois Lyotard. These thinkers emphasized the importance of understanding how language and discourse shape our perceptions of reality and how power relationships are embedded within these discourses. For example, in literary studies, post-structuralism emphasizes the role of language and discourse in shaping meaning and interpretation. It argues that literary texts do not have fixed or objective meanings, but are instead shaped by the cultural and historical contexts in which they were produced and received. Another example of the application of post-structuralist thought is in the study of gender and sexuality. Post-structuralism emphasizes the role of discourse and power in shaping gender, sexual identities and relationships. It argues that these identities are not fixed or innate, but are instead shaped by socio-cultural contexts and power relationships.

4.1.1.1 Claude Levi-Strauss

“The more we claim to discriminate between cultures and customs as good and bad, the more completely we identify ourselves with those we would condemn. By refusing to consider as human those who seem to us to be the most ‘savage’ or ‘barbarous’ of their representatives, we merely adopt one of their own characteristic attitudes. The barbarian is, first and foremost, the man who believes in barbarism.” — Claude Lévi-Strauss, [Race et histoire](#)

◆ *Claude- Levi Strauss propounded: The Theory Of Structuralism*

Claude Lévi-Strauss was a French anthropologist who is considered as one of the founding figures of structuralism. Lévi-Strauss formulated his famous concept of structural anthropology during his time in the U.S. Indeed, this theory is unusual in anthropology in that it is inextricably linked to the writing and thinking of one scholar. Structuralism offered a new and distinctive way to approach the study of culture built on the scholarly and methodological approaches of cultural anthropology and structural linguistics. In his book *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Levi-Strauss argues that



kinship systems are not just biological relationships but are also symbolic systems that reflect social and cultural values.

♦ According to Levi Strauss Power structures shape gender dynamics.

According to Levi-Strauss, the human brain was wired to organize the world in terms of key structures of organization, which enabled people to order and interpret experience. Since these structures were universal, all cultural systems were inherently logical. They simply used different systems of understanding to explain the world around them, resulting in the stunning diversity of myths, beliefs, and practices. The anthropologist's task, according to Lévi-Strauss, was to explore and explain the logic within a particular cultural system. Regarding gender, kinship systems are organized around a binary opposition between nature and culture, with women being associated with nature and men with culture. Levi-Strauss argues that this binary opposition is used to create and reinforce gender roles, with women being assigned a reproductive role and men being assigned a productive role.

4.1.1.2 Roland Barthes



"This represents the essence of what is euphemistically termed dialogue: not to listen to one another, but to collectively adhere to an egalitarian principle governing the distribution of linguistic resources." — Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*

♦ *Role of symbols*

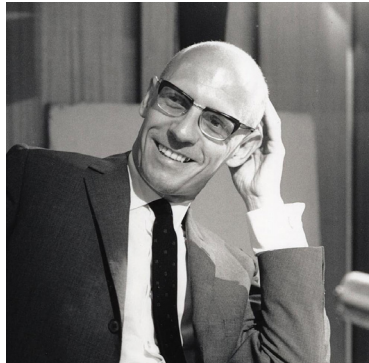
Roland Barthes, a French philosopher and literary critic, is renowned for his contributions to semiotics, the study of signs and symbols. His work has wielded significant influence in the field of gender studies, particularly through his examination of gendered symbols and representations prevalent in popular culture. Barthes's analysis has shed light on how language and symbols contribute to the construction of gender and the ways in which such constructions reinforce power dynamics. In his essay "*Toys*," Barthes scrutinizes the role of children's toys in perpetuating and solidifying gender roles. He contends that toys designed for boys often revolve around themes of aggression and action, whereas those tailored for girls emphasize passivity and domesticity. Using the example of baby dolls intended for girls, he states: "There exist, for instance, dolls which urinate; they possess an oesophagus, one feeds them with a bottle, they wet their nappies... This aims to prepare the young girl for the causality of homemaking, to 'condition' her for her future role as a mother." This not only demonstrates the connection between toys and adult life but also underscores the unmistakable gendering of toys, instilling specific gender roles in the minds of children.

♦ *Children are provided with a pre-packaged set of "feelings" and "values"*

According to Barthes, toys excessively guide children, depriving them of the opportunity for imaginative and creative play: "They are transformed into miniature homemakers, devoid of the need to invent the mechanisms of adult causality. These mechanisms are readily provided, requiring only their assistance, denying them the chance to discover from beginning to end." The majority of toys, particularly those targeted at girls, do not encourage building cars, ships, buildings, planes, or superheroes as advertised for boys. Instead, they promote enjoyment of simplistic, decorative, and fun activities such as baking, cooking, and caring for dolls at a young age. These toys also prepare girls for the societal expectations of fulfilling roles as housewives and mothers. Toys designed for girls predominantly feature pink and purple colours, while boys' toys are primarily blue. The social significance of these colours lies in their ability to create a division between genders.



4.1.1.3 Michel Foucault



“Power is tolerable only under the condition that it conceals a significant part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to conceal its own mechanisms.”— Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1: An Introduction

♦ *Michel Foucault focuses on power and knowledge and the way it operates in any given society*

Michel Foucault was a French philosopher and social theorist renowned for his work on power and knowledge. His theories have had a profound impact on understanding how power operates in society and the way it intersects with gender, giving rise to systems of domination and oppression. In his book *“The History of Sexuality,”* Foucault argues that discourses on sexuality and gender are employed to establish and reinforce power dynamics.

♦ *Power is a pervasive force that dictates our lives*

Foucault’s understanding of power differs from the traditional perspective that views power as something possessed by individuals or groups. He posited that power is not exclusively held by those in authoritative positions but exists within all social relationships and practices. Power, according to Foucault, cannot be acquired or lost; instead, it is an all-encompassing force that operates in every aspect of our lives.

♦ *Gender is shaped by social standards, values and customs*

Foucault’s theory of power is closely intertwined with his examination of gender dynamics. He posited that gender is not an inherent biological classification, but rather a social construct influenced by the exertion of power. In his own words, “The concept of gender, far from being an inherent or natural reality, arises from an extensive range of societal customs, power dynamics, and power techniques.” This implies that gender is not solely determined by biology, but is also molded by societal standards, values, and customs that define the characteristics associated with being male or female.

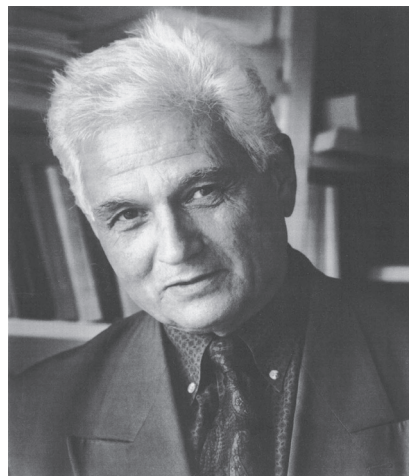
♦ *Focuses on concepts such as power and knowledge and it's interconnectedness with each other*

One of the central concepts in Foucault's theory of power is the notion of "power/knowledge." He proposed that power and knowledge are interconnected and that knowledge is not impartial but influenced by power dynamics. As he stated, "Power is not an institution or a structure; it is not a fixed capacity we possess; it is the name given to a complex strategic situation in a particular society." This suggests that power goes beyond mere physical strength and includes the production and dissemination of knowledge. Foucault also emphasized the role of discourse in shaping gender relations.

♦ *Language about gender shaped power dynamics*

He argued that discourse is not merely a form of communication, but also a means of producing and maintaining power relations. In his words, "Discourse... produces knowledge; it produces fields of objects and rituals of truth; it also produces subjects and effects of power." This implies that the language we employ to discuss gender is not neutral, but is influenced by power relations and can perpetuate and reinforce systems of domination and oppression. Foucault's work has had a significant impact on queer theory, a field that challenges conventional understandings of gender and sexuality. Queer theorists have drawn on Foucault's ideas to illuminate how power relationships are embedded within discourses surrounding gender and sexuality, and to question traditional notions of identity and desire.

4.1.1.4 Jacques Derrida



"No one becomes angry with a mathematician or physicist whom they do not understand, or with someone who speaks a foreign language, but rather with someone who interferes with their own language." — Jacques Derrida

◆ *Derrida highlighted how gender is a construct of language*

Jacques Derrida is was a French philosopher renowned for his work on deconstruction, a method of literary analysis that aims to challenge the binary oppositions commonly used to create meaning. Derrida's contributions have been influential in the field of gender studies, particularly in his examination of how language and discourse shape our comprehension of gender.

◆ *Example of how these constructions affect power relationships*

Derrida's work has shed light on how gender is constructed through language and discourse, and how these constructions can reinforce power dynamics. For instance, his analysis of the notion of "phallogocentrism" has helped expose the use of language. In his essay "Plato's Pharmacy," he states, "Phallogocentrism governs everything, even what purports to challenge it." He elucidates that phallogocentrism is a system of thought and language that revolves around the masculine while excluding or marginalizing the feminine.

◆ *Assumes some traits as masculine while others as exclusively feminine*

At the core of phallogocentrism lies the presumption that reason, logic, and rationality are masculine attributes, while emotion, intuition, and creativity are feminine. This dichotomy establishes a hierarchical structure wherein masculine traits are considered superior and feminine traits are deemed inferior. As elucidated by Derrida in his essay "The Ends of Man," "phallogocentrism has upheld the notion of man as the rational animal, the one who possesses logos, reason." One mechanism through which phallogocentrism operates is by means of binary oppositions, such as male/female, mind/body, and reason/emotion. These oppositions engender a hierarchy in which one term is privileged over the other, and the privileged term is typically associated with masculinity. As Derrida expounds upon in his essay "Différance," "the relationship between the two terms of a binary opposition is not merely one of simple difference but of hierarchy, in which one term is accorded privilege over the other."

◆ *Illustration the working mechanism of phallogocentrism in the realm of philosophy*

To illustrate the workings of phallogocentrism within a specific context, let us examine the realm of philosophy. As an academic field, philosophy has historically been predominantly male-dominated, with many of its fundamental texts and concepts rooted in phallogocentric assumptions. For instance, the notion of the rational, independent subject, which forms a central tenet of Western philosophy, is constructed upon a phallogocentric conception of reason and individuality. In his essay "White Mythology," Derrida aptly states, "Western metaphysics has been established on a notion of the subject

that is autonomous, unified, and masculine.”

◆ *Women and people of ‘color’ been underrepresented in philosophy*

An additional instance of phallogocentrism’s influence in philosophy becomes apparent in the exclusion of women and other marginalized groups from philosophical discourse. Throughout history, women and individuals from marginalized communities have been significantly underrepresented in philosophy, leading to the marginalization of their voices and perspectives. Derrida highlights this issue in his essay “Cogito and the History of Madness,” stating that “women and non-Europeans have been systematically excluded from the tradition of reason in the same manner as madness.”

◆ *Language is never neutral or objective*

According to Derrida, language is never neutral or objective; it is always inherently connected to power dynamics and social hierarchies. In his essay “Signature Event Context,” he asserts that “there is no such thing as a neutral context, a context that would not be influenced by the prejudices, assumptions, and biases of the language in which it is articulated.” This implies that even seemingly harmless words and phrases can harbour implicit biases and presumptions about gender and other identities.

◆ *Gender is not seen as a fixed binary*

Derrida also believed that gender is not a fixed, binary category, but rather a fluid and constantly shifting construct that is deeply intertwined with language and power. In his essay “The Law of Genre,” he writes that “the law of gender... is a law of genres, and every genre has its law.” This means that the way we understand and categorise gender is not inherent or natural, but rather the result of a complex interplay between linguistic and cultural factors.

◆ *Derrida’s analysis of Shakespeare’s play Hamlet*

To illustrate these ideas, let us turn to Derrida’s analysis of Shakespeare’s play, Hamlet. In his essay “Differance,” Derrida argues that the character of Ophelia is a prime example of how gender is constructed through language and power. He writes, “Ophelia is a character who is the victim of two dominant discourses: that of her father and that of her lover. Both use her as a kind of text to be read, deciphered, and interpreted according to their own interests.”

◆ *Ophelia and two competing discourses seeking control and defining identities*

Derrida argues that Ophelia is caught between two competing discourses that both seek to control and define her identity. Her father, Polonius, sees her as a chaste and obedient daughter who must conform to traditional gender roles. Her lover, Hamlet, on the other hand, sees her as a sexual object and uses language to manipulate and control



her.

♦ *Through his analysis of the play Ophelia, Derrida shows that gender is not fixed, but is fluid in nature*

Derrida's analysis of Ophelia shows how gender is not a fixed or natural category, but rather a construct that is deeply tied to power dynamics and linguistic practices. By examining the ways in which language is used to construct and control gender identities, Derrida encourages us to be more critical and reflective about the ways in which we use language in our own lives.

4.1.1.5 Other Arguments

♦ *Masculinity molded by power*

Sociologist Raewyn Connell argues that gender is not solely a binary division between men and women, but rather a system of power relations influenced by various social, cultural, and historical factors. In her book *Masculinities*, Connell posits that masculinity is not merely an inherent trait of individual men, but rather a social construct molded by power dynamics between men and women, as well as within groups of men themselves.

♦ *Use of gendered language can reinforce power relationships*

One of the key ways in which power is embedded within gender discourse is through the use of language. For instance, the utilization of gendered language can reinforce power relationships between men and women. This can be observed in how masculine terms, like "chairman," are employed to denote positions of power, whereas feminine terms, like "nurse," are used to denote positions of lower status.

♦ *Post-structuralist approaches to gender have been applied in a range of fields including literature*

Post-structuralist approaches to gender have been employed in various disciplines, including literature, film studies, sociology, and anthropology. An illustration of the application of post-structuralist ideas in literature is the examination of Virginia Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*. Within this novel, Woolf delves into the journey of the protagonist, Clarissa Dalloway, and how her gender identity is influenced by the societal and cultural conventions of her era.

Another example of the application of post-structuralist thought in the field of sociology is the study of the gendered division of labour within households. Within this framework, gendered roles within households are viewed as social constructions that are shaped by power relationships between men and women, as well as cultural and historical factors. For example, sociologist Arlie Hochschild argues that the gendered division of labour within households is shaped by cultural beliefs about gender roles, as well as economic factors

♦ *‘Gendered Division of Labour’*

such as the availability of paid work. Within this framework, gender is viewed as a social construction that is shaped by language, power, and discourse. Power relationships are understood as being embedded within gender discourse and are constantly negotiated and contested through language and discourse. By analysing gender dynamics within this framework, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which social, cultural, and historical factors shape our perceptions of gender, as well as the power relations that are embedded within gender discourse.

4.1.2 New Historicism- Stephen Greenblatt

♦ *Emphasizes the interconnections between texts and their historical contexts*

New Historicism is a critical theory that emerged in the late twentieth century, seeking to understand literature and culture within their historical contexts. The theory rejects the notion that literature and culture can be understood independently of the social and political circumstances in which they were produced. Instead, New Historicism emphasizes the interconnections between texts and their historical contexts and the ways in which these contexts shape the meaning and interpretation of literary works.

♦ *Examining the political, social, and economic factors*

New Historicism is a critical theory that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, primarily concerned with understanding literature and culture in their historical contexts. It emphasizes the importance of examining the political, social, and economic factors that shape a text’s production and reception, as well as the ways in which a text can shape its historical context. In this essay, we will explore the key principles of New Historicism and provide case studies and examples to illustrate its application.

♦ *Every text is embedded in its historical context*

The first principle of New Historicism is that every text is embedded in its historical context. This means that a text can never be fully understood without considering the historical events, social movements, and cultural practices of its time. For example, William Shakespeare’s play “Hamlet” can be seen as a response to the political and social turmoil of Elizabethan England, including the Protestant Reformation and the rise of absolutist monarchs.

One of the key ways in which power is embedded within gender discourse is through the use of language. For example, the use of gendered language can reinforce power relationships between men and women. This can be seen



♦ *Power is embedded within gender discourse through language*

in the way that masculine terms, such as “chairperson,” are used to refer to positions of power, while feminine terms, such as “nurse,” are used to refer to positions of lower status.

♦ *A text can be seen as a site of struggle between different groups and individuals with competing interests.*

Another key principle of New Historicism is that power is always at play in cultural production and reception. This means that a text can be seen as a site of struggle between different groups and individuals with competing interests. For example, Toni Morrison’s novel “Beloved” can be read as a critique of the history of slavery in the United States and the ways in which black bodies have been objectified and commodified by white people.

♦ *Language is already embedded in power relations.*

A third principle of New Historicism is that language is not transparent, but rather, it is always already embedded in power relations. This means that a text’s language can be seen as a site of struggle over meaning and interpretation. For example, the way in which Shakespeare’s characters use language in “Othello” can be seen as a reflection of the hierarchical power relations between men and women, as well as between white and black people.

♦ *The Hogg’s novel can be read as a critique of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.*

To illustrate these principles, let us turn to two case studies. The first case study concerns the Scottish author James Hogg and his novel “The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner.” Hogg’s novel was published in 1824, at a time when Scotland was undergoing significant social and economic changes due to the Industrial Revolution. The novel can be read as a critique of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, which was a central feature of Scottish religious and social life at the time. By exploring the ways in which the protagonist, Robert Wringhim, is driven to commit murder in the name of religious salvation, the novel reveals how power relations are embedded in the language and beliefs of Scottish society.

♦ *Manifest Destiny*

The second case study concerns the American author Herman Melville and his novel “Moby-Dick.” Melville’s novel was published in 1851, at a time when the United States was expanding westward and engaging in a brutal campaign of colonialism against indigenous peoples. “Moby-Dick” can be read as a critique of the capitalist ideology of Manifest Destiny, which justified the seizure of land and resources from Native Americans. By exploring the ways in which the whale becomes a symbol of both nature and resistance to colonialism, the novel reveals how power relations are embedded in the language and beliefs of American society.



“Something happened in the Renaissance, something that surged up against the constraints that centuries had constructed around curiosity, desire, individuality, sustained attention to the material world, the claims of the body.”— Stephen Greenblatt, [The Swerve: How the World Became Modern](#)

♦ *Construction of identity was inseparable from the context in which it occurred.*

Stephen Greenblatt is a prominent scholar in the field of new historicism. In his book “Renaissance Self-Fashioning,” Greenblatt explores how individuals in the Renaissance period constructed their identities through their interactions with cultural and social structures. Greenblatt argues that self-fashioning was a means of negotiating power relationships and that the construction of identity was inseparable from the historical context in which it occurred. Greenblatt’s work has had a significant impact in the field of intersectionality.

♦ *Shaped by cultural and social contexts in which they are identified*

Hayden White is another prominent scholar in the field of new historicism. In his book “Metahistory,” White argues that historical narratives are not objective accounts of the past but are instead shaped by the cultural and social contexts in which they are produced. White argues that historical narratives follow narrative conventions that serve to create and reinforce power relationships.

♦ *Historical narratives reinforce dominant power structures*

White’s work has been influential in the field of intersectionality, particularly in his analysis of how historical narratives reinforce dominant power structures. White’s analysis highlights how historical narratives can be used to marginalize and erase the experiences of marginalized groups and how these groups can challenge these narratives through their own counter-narratives.

Together, Greenblatt and White’s contributions to new



♦ *Different forms of oppression intersect and overlap*

historicism have helped to highlight the interconnections between literature, culture, and historical context. Their work has emphasized the ways in which different forms of oppression intersect and overlap and how power relationships are embedded within cultural and social structures. Their analysis underscores the importance of understanding the historical context in which literature and culture are produced and how this context shapes our understanding of texts and their meanings.

4.1.3. Post-Colonial Version - Edward Said

♦ *Potential to promote cultural relativism.*

Post-colonial understandings of postmodernism in relation to race and gender are intricate and diverse. Although postmodernism is praised for its criticism of essentialism and its recognition of the contingent nature of identity categories, some postcolonial scholars argue that it can reinforce existing power dynamics and hinder efforts to combat colonialism, racism, and sexism. A significant criticism of postmodernism from a post-colonial perspective is its potential to promote cultural relativism, where all cultural practices and beliefs are considered equally valid. This presents a challenge in confronting oppressive practices and beliefs rooted in colonialism and racism.

♦ *Useful tool for challenging colonialism, racism, and sexism.*

Another critique of postmodernism from a post-colonial standpoint is its reinforcement of power relations through its emphasis on the contingency of identity categories. Certain postcolonial scholars argue that postmodernism can impede efforts to challenge essentialist views of race and gender by suggesting that these categories are purely arbitrary and lack inherent meaning or significance. Despite these criticisms, many postcolonial scholars have found postmodernism to be a valuable tool in addressing colonialism, racism, and sexism. A key strength of postmodernism lies in its emphasis on the contingent nature of identity categories, which aids in challenging essentialist notions of race and gender.

Additionally, postmodernism has proven valuable in challenging dominant narratives of colonialism and imperialism, as well as in highlighting the diversity and intricacy of post-colonial experiences. By emphasising the multiplicity of post-colonial experiences and identities, postmodernism can aid in contesting prevailing narratives

♦ *Racism influenced identity categories like race and gender.*

that present post-colonial societies as uniform and static. An example of postmodernism's application in a post-colonial context can be found in the work of Homi Bhabha. Bhabha has utilised postmodernist theory to examine how colonialism and racism have influenced identity categories, such as race and gender. He contends that these categories are perpetually evolving and subject to ongoing negotiation within power dynamics.



"Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate." (Los Angeles Times, July 20, 2003) - Edward W. Said

♦ *Edward Said has done extensive studies on the intersections of race, sex and postmodernism*

Edward Said was a prominent post-colonial scholar who has written extensively on the intersections of race, sex, and postmodernism. His work has been influential in challenging traditional Eurocentric views of culture and history and emphasizing the importance of understanding the experiences of colonized peoples. Said's views on postmodernism are complex and nuanced. On the one hand, he has been critical of some aspects of postmodernism, particularly its tendency towards cultural relativism and its focus on the contingency of identity categories. Said has argued that these aspects of postmodernism can be problematic because they can make it difficult to challenge power relations and dominant narratives of colonialism and racism.

On the other hand, Said has also acknowledged the



♦ *Challenged mainstream historical narratives*

potential of postmodernism to challenge dominant narratives and to provide a platform for marginalized voices. He has emphasized the importance of recognizing the diversity and complexity of post-colonial experiences, and he has argued that postmodernism can provide a useful framework for doing so.

♦ *Western construct of "orient" as a homogenous and exotic other*

One case study that illustrates Said's views on postmodernism in the context of race and sex is his analysis of the Orientalist discourse. In his influential book "*Orientalism*," Said examines the ways in which Western writers and scholars have constructed the Orient as a homogeneous and exotic other. He argues that this discourse has been used to justify colonialism and imperialism and to reinforce the power of the West over the East.

♦ *Identity categories and shaping of power relations*

From a postmodernist perspective, Said's analysis of Orientalism illustrates the contingency of identity categories and the ways in which these categories are shaped by power relations. He argues that the Orientalist discourse is not a reflection of an objective reality but rather a product of the power relations between the West and the East. By challenging the essentialist views of identity categories that underpin Orientalism, Said is able to show how postmodernism can be used to challenge dominant narratives of colonialism and imperialism.

♦ *Example of how postmodernism can be used to challenge power relations.*

Overall, Said's views on postmodernism in the context of race and sex are complex and nuanced. While he has been critical of some aspects of postmodernism, particularly its tendency towards cultural relativism, he has also acknowledged its potential to challenge dominant narratives and to provide a platform for marginalized voices. His analysis of Orientalism is just one example of how postmodernism can be used to challenge power relations and to provide a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of colonized peoples.

Summarised Overview

Postmodern methodologies challenge traditional historical approaches by acknowledging the intersecting dynamics of race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability that shape historical experience. They oppose the concept of objective historical reality, emphasising the subjective and contextual aspects of historical narratives. Deconstruction is used in these approaches to analyse the language and biases present in historical texts, exposing the manufactured form of historical knowledge.

Postmodern historians recognize that different forms of oppression interact and compound each other, creating unique historical contexts. They prioritize the voices and perspectives of marginalized groups, aiming to uncover and amplify their experiences that have been historically marginalized.

Self Assessment

1. How does post-structuralism challenge the principles of structuralism?
2. How does post-structuralism emphasize the role of language and discourse in historical interpretation?
3. How does intersectional historiography address power dynamics within historical contexts?
4. What is the significance of centering marginalized voices in intersectional historiography?
5. How does new historicism challenge the separation of high culture and popular culture in historical analysis?
6. What is the role of power and ideology in new historicist approaches to history?
7. Discuss the identity categories and shaping of power relations as stated by Edward Said?

Assignments

1. Discuss the role of language and discourse in postmodern historiography. How does language shape historical interpretations?
2. Analyze the concept of intersectionality in postmodern historiography. How does the intersection of different social categories shape historical experiences and narratives?



Suggested Readings

1. Francois Lyotard, *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, University of Minnesota Press, 1984
2. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, 1990
3. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, University of Chicago Press, 1978
4. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Pantheon Books, 1970
5. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, 1978

References

1. A. V. Cicourel (ed.), *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1981.
2. Alex Callinicos, *Making History, Agency, Structure, and Change in Social Theory*, Brill, London.
3. Alex Callinicos, *Social theory: A Historical Introduction*, Wiley, 2007.
4. Alun Munslow, *Narrative, and History*, Palgrave, 2007.
5. Andre Burguiere, *The Annales School, An Intellectual History*, Cornell University Press, 2009.
6. Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, Hutchinson, London, 1977.
7. Aram Veesser, *The New Historicism*, Routledge, 2016.
8. Ange-Marie-Hancock (ed.), *Intersectionality: A Foundations and Frontiers Reader*, Routledge, 2016



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Contemporary Pathways

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, learners will be able to:

- ◆ comprehend various viewpoints and interpretations on modern historical narratives
- ◆ exhibit an understanding of the social, cultural, political, and economic influences that shape modern historical events
- ◆ contemplate the importance and relevance of studying contemporary history

Background

There is an ongoing evolution in the ways that scholars and researchers approach the study of history. Some of the most prominent trends include a focus on social and cultural history, an increased interest in global and comparative perspectives, and a growing emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration and methodological innovation.

One key trend in historical theory has been a turn towards social and cultural history, which seeks to understand the social, economic, and cultural forces that shape historical events and processes. This approach has emphasized the importance of studying not just political elites and institutions, but also the experiences of ordinary people, social movements, and cultural practices.

Another important trend has been the growing interest in global and comparative history, which seeks to understand historical phenomena in a broader, global context. This approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of historical events and processes across different regions and societies seeking to identify patterns and similarities that cut across diverse historical experiences.

Interdisciplinary collaboration and methodological innovation have emerged as important trends in historical theory in recent years. Historians are increasingly drawing on insights and methods from fields such as anthropology, sociology, and literary studies by experimenting with new tools and techniques to analyze and interpret historical sources.



Finally, there has been growing recognition of the need for historians to engage with public audiences and address contemporary social and political issues. This trend has led to an increased focus on public history and digital history, which seek to make historical research and knowledge more accessible and engaging to a wider audience.

Keywords

Environmental History, Dust Bowl, Ozone hole, Montreal Protocol, Deforestation, Micro-histories, Reflexivity, Gopal Guru, Sundar Sarukkai

Discussion

4.2.1 Environmental History

Environmental history is an interdisciplinary field of study that examines the relationships between human societies and the natural world over time. It seeks to understand the ways in which human activities have transformed the environment and how these changes have affected human societies, ecosystems, and the planet as a whole. The origins of environmental history can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s when the environmental movements to protect nature including flora and fauna, raised concerns about the impact of human activities on the environment.

♦ *The origins of environmental history can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s*

4.2.1.1 Evolution of Environmental History

One of the earliest and most influential figures in the field was William Cronon, whose 1983 book *“Changes in the Land”* explored the impact of European settlement on the environment of colonial New England. Cronon argued that the European settlers of the region had transformed the landscape through deforestation, agriculture, and other practices, and that this transformation had far-reaching consequences for both human and non-human populations.

♦ *European settlers transformed the landscape through deforestation, agriculture, and other practices.*

Roderick Nash, whose 1967 book *“Wilderness and the American Mind”* explored the cultural and intellectual roots of the American conservation movement. Nash argued that the idea of wilderness as a sacred and unspoiled place was deeply ingrained in American culture and had played a key role in shaping environmental attitudes and policies. Since the early work of Cronon and Nash, environmental history has



♦ *This sentiment played a key role in shaping environmental attitudes and policies*

grown and diversified in a number of ways. One important development has been the expansion of the field beyond the study of North America and Europe to include a wider range of regions and societies. Environmental historians have explored topics such as the impact of colonialism and capitalism on the environment of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and the ways in which indigenous societies have interacted with and managed their environments over time.

♦ *The power is embedded within gender discourse through the use of language*

One of the key ways in which power is embedded within gender discourse is through the use of language. For example, the use of gendered language can reinforce power relationships between men and women. This can be seen in the way that masculine terms, such as “chairman,” are used to refer to positions of power, while feminine terms, such as “nurse,” are used to refer to positions of lower status.

♦ *Drawing on insights and methods from other fields*

Another important development in environmental history has been the increasing focus on interdisciplinary collaboration and methodological innovation. Environmental historians are increasingly drawing on insights and methods from fields such as ecology, geography, and anthropology to better understand the complex interactions between human societies and the natural world. They are also experimenting with new tools and technologies, such as GIS mapping and remote sensing, to analyze and interpret historical sources.

To illustrate the diversity and richness of environmental history, we can examine a few case studies and examples from different regions and periods.

4.2.1.2 The Dust Bowl

♦ *Explored the causes and consequences of the Dust Bowl*

The Dust Bowl was a significant environmental disaster that occurred in the United States’ Great Plains region during the 1930s. It is a notable event in environmental history because it demonstrates the intricate link between human activity and the natural environment. The Dust Bowl was characterized by violent dust storms, soil degradation, and agricultural destruction. It was primarily caused by a combination of natural factors, such as prolonged drought and high winds, and human actions, particularly unsustainable farming practices, all of which were compounded by the great economic collapse in 1929. Environmental historians have explored the causes and consequences of the Dust Bowl, including the impact of intensive farming practices, drought, and soil erosion. They have also examined the ways in which the federal government responded to the crisis, through

programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Soil Conservation Service.

♦ *The Dust Bowl exemplifies the concept of 'ecological imperialism,'*

The Dust Bowl exemplifies the concept of 'ecological imperialism,' wherein human interventions in the environment can have far-reaching ecological and social ramifications. It also highlights communities' resilience and adaptive capacities as they faced and dealt with environmental difficulties. It serves as a crucial case study in environmental history, illustrating the complex interplay between human actions, climatic conditions and the environment. It emphasizes the importance of sustainable land management practices and serves as a reminder of the long-term consequences of ecological degradation.

4.2.1.3 Indigenous Land Management

♦ *Controlled burning to manage their environments for thousands of years*

Indigenous societies around the world have developed sophisticated techniques for managing their environments over thousands of years. Environmental historians have explored the environmental knowledge and practices of indigenous communities, as well as the ways in which these practices have been suppressed and marginalized by colonialism and modernization. For example, in Australia, indigenous societies have practiced controlled burning to manage their environments for thousands of years. Environmental historians have shown how these practices have been disrupted by the introduction of European livestock and agriculture, leading to ecological and social dislocation.

♦ *Indigenous peoples have employed a range of techniques*

In many Indigenous cultures, the relationship with the land is rooted in a holistic worldview that recognizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and the need for balance and harmony with nature. Indigenous land management practices often prioritize sustainability, resource conservation, and the maintenance of biodiversity. Indigenous people have employed a range of techniques to steward and sustainably manage their lands. These include controlled burning, rotational agriculture, terracing, seed selection, agroforestry, and water management systems. Such practices have helped maintain soil fertility, prevent erosion, regulate water flow and support the growth of diverse plant and animal species.

These practices also recognize the importance of



♦ *Many traditional practices align with modern notions of sustainability.*

intergenerational knowledge transmission, as elders pass down their ecological wisdom and practices to younger generations. The study of this land management provides valuable insights into sustainable land-use practices and alternative approaches to resource management. It challenges the notion that Indigenous peoples were passive recipients of their environments and demonstrates their active role as environmental stewards. Moreover, understanding Indigenous land management practices can inform contemporary environmental debates and policies. Many traditional practices align with modern notions of ecological sustainability, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience. Incorporating Indigenous perspectives into environmental management and conservation efforts can lead to more effective and culturally appropriate approaches.

4.2.1.4 The Bhopal Gas Tragedy in India

♦ *Long term implications for environmental justice and corporate responsibility*

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy of 1984, in which a gas leak at a pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, led to the loss of thousands of lives and long-term environmental contamination, illustrates the evolution of environmental history in the context of industrial disasters. Initially, the focus was on immediate health impacts and legal battles. However, environmental historians like Mike Davis and Satpal Sangwan later examined the historical and social context, investigating factors such as industrialization, urbanization, and the political economy of chemical production. They analyzed the long-term consequences and the implications for environmental justice and corporate responsibility.

4.2.1.5 The Ozone Hole and Global Environmental Governance:

♦ *Drew everyone's attention towards global environmental issues*

The discovery of the ozone hole in the 1980s, primarily over Antarctica, brought attention to global environmental issues and the need for international cooperation. This case study showcases the evolution of environmental history in the context of global environmental governance. Initially, scientific research on ozone depletion dominated the discourse. However, environmental historians like J. R. McNeill and Peter Haas examined the historical roots of international environmental cooperation, the role of scientific expertise, the political negotiations leading to the Montreal Protocol, and the subsequent impacts on global environmental policy. They shed light on the complex relationship between science, politics, and environmental

decision-making. By expanding beyond simple narratives and adding interdisciplinary perspectives, human agency, social settings, and policy consequences in understanding and interpreting environmental processes and events, these case studies show how environmental history has developed.

4.2.2 Micro-Histories

Microhistories refer to a historical approach that focuses on studying specific individuals, events, or communities in great detail. Instead of examining broad historical narratives or macro-level trends, microhistories zoom in on the particular and the specific aspects of history. By delving into the lives and experiences of ordinary people, microhistories seek to uncover the intricacies and complexities of historical phenomena at a localized level.

♦ *Studying specific individuals, events, or communities in great detail.*

4.2.2.1 Origin and evolution of Microhistory

The origins of microhistory can be traced back to the work of Italian historians in the 1970s. These historians, including Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi, were influenced by the Annales school of history, which emphasized the importance of social and cultural history and rejected traditional political history. They sought to develop a new approach to history that focused on small-scale phenomena, such as individual people, events, or communities. One of the key features of microhistory is its attention to detail and its use of highly localized sources, such as personal diaries, letters, and court records. Microhistorians seek to uncover the hidden or overlooked aspects of historical events and to understand how these events affected the lives of ordinary people. It came into being as a reaction to the then-dominant trends, which emphasized grand narratives and macro-level assessments.

♦ *Micro Historians seek to uncover the hidden or overlooked aspects of historical events.*

Since its emergence in the 1970s, microhistory has undergone a number of evolutions and developments. One of the most significant developments has been the expansion of the field beyond Italy and into other parts of the world. Microhistorians in different countries have developed their own approaches and methodologies and have explored a wide range of topics, including social and cultural history, gender history, and environmental history.

♦ *Micro Historians have developed their own approaches and methodologies.*

Another important development in microhistory has been the increasing use of interdisciplinary approaches



♦ *Insights and methods from anthropology, Sociology and Literary studies*

and methodologies. Microhistorians draw on insights and methods from fields such as anthropology, sociology, and literary studies to better understand the complex relationships between individuals, communities, and historical processes. The origins of microhistory can be attributed to the works of a group of Italian historians known as the Annales School. Led by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, this school sought to bring a more nuanced and interdisciplinary approach to historical research. In the 1960s, one of their prominent members, Carlo Ginzburg, laid the foundation for microhistory with his influential essay "*Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm*."

To illustrate the diversity and richness of microhistory, we can examine a few case studies and examples from different regions and periods.

4.2.2.2 The Cheese and the Worms

Carlo Ginzburg's book *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* is a classic example of microhistory. Menocchio, a miller from the village of Montereale in northern Italy, held unconventional religious beliefs that challenged the teachings of the Catholic Church. He believed in a combination of Christian, Pagan, and folk traditions, forming a unique cosmology that blended diverse ideas. Menocchio's unorthodox views came to the attention of the Inquisition, leading to his trial and execution. In "*The Cheese and the Worms*," Ginzburg uses Menocchio's case to explore broader themes related to Microhistory. He meticulously examines Menocchio's testimony during his trial and scrutinizes his ideas and thought processes. Ginzburg delves into Menocchio's social context, including the peasant culture, oral traditions and intellectual influences of the time. Ginzburg sheds light on the cultural and intellectual world of an ordinary miller through the instance of Menocchio and provides insights into popular religion, folklore, and the conflict between oral and written traditions.

♦ *Ginzburg uses Menocchio's case to explore broader themes related to microhistory.*

♦ *The book demonstrates the study of a single individual revealing larger historical phenomena.*

The book illustrates how the examination of an individual can unveil significant historical phenomena, such as the coexistence of diverse belief systems, the transmission of ideas in rural communities, and the interaction between popular culture and official religious doctrines. Ginzburg's analysis reveals the active role played by ordinary people in shaping their beliefs, challenging traditional notions of historical agency that focus solely on elites or influential figures.

4.2.2.3 The Return of Martin Guerre

◆ *Davis delves into the intricate details of the lives of individuals, their families, and the rural community*

“The Return of Martin Guerre” is a book by Natalie Zemon Davis that narrates the tale of a 16th-century French peasant named Martin Guerre. It recounts the story of Martin Guerre, who disappeared from his village for several years before reappearing and claiming his inheritance. Davis utilizes court records and other documents to reconstruct the intricate network of social and economic relationships that existed in the village, as well as to explore how Guerre’s return disrupted these relationships. Davis delves into the intricate details of the lives of the individuals, their families, and the rural community they resided in.

◆ *Davis reconstructs the social, cultural, and legal dynamics of the time.*

By examining the specific context of Artigat, a single village, and the individuals involved, Davis reconstructs the social, cultural, and legal dynamics of the time. She examines the roles of gender, family, and community in shaping the identities and actions of Martin Guerre and Arnaud du Tilh. The book also addresses broader themes, including power dynamics within peasant communities and the influence of religion and law on everyday life. It underscores the importance of investigating personal experiences and local contexts to comprehend broader historical processes and social dynamics. In this case, the microhistorical approach enables a more profound exploration of themes such as identity, social norms, community values, and the construction of truth and justice.

4.2.2.4 The Saltwater Frontier

◆ *A wide range of sources were used to explore the ways in which the natives adapted to the changing environmental conditions*

“The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast” by Andrew Lipman is an example of microhistory within the realm of environmental history. The book recounts the story of the Wampanoag Indians who resided along the New England coast in the seventeenth century and their interactions with European colonizers. Lipman utilizes an array of sources, including maps, journals, and oral histories, to explore how the Wampanoag adapted to the changing environmental conditions brought about by European colonization. It examines the intricate connections between local communities, environments, and broader historical processes in the context of coastal regions. It highlights the significance of examining specific micro histories to gain insights into broader patterns and transformations. For example, by studying the experiences of particular fishing villages or families, historians can shed light on larger historical processes such as industrialization,



maritime trade, environmental changes, and social dynamics.

♦ *Explores the different factors that influenced the fishing industry*

To illustrate, a microhistory of a fishing community in a coastal town like Gloucester, Massachusetts, could delve into the various factors influencing the local fishing industry. It could explore the experiences of individual fishermen, their families, and the social networks that sustained their livelihoods. By focusing on the micro level, historians can uncover the daily challenges, successes, and adaptations of fishing families in response to shifting economic conditions, government regulations, changes in fishing techniques, and declining fish stocks. This microhistory could reveal the social, cultural, and economic impacts of these transformations on the local community, exploring themes of identity, resilience, and environmental sustainability.

♦ *Microhistory allows for a deeper understanding of the multifaceted relationships*

Analyzing the micro history of a specific fishing community allows for a deeper understanding of the multifaceted relationships between human societies and coastal environments. It also provides insights into broader historical processes, such as the commodification of natural resources, the role of technology in shaping industries, and the impact of environmental changes on local livelihoods.

4.2.3 Indian Debate on Experience and Theory -Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai

♦ *The relationship is between lived experiences and theoretical frameworks in understanding marginalised communities.*

The Indian discourse on experience and theory centers on the correlation between lived experiences and theoretical frameworks when comprehending social phenomena and knowledge generation in the Indian context. It encompasses perspectives on caste, identity, power, and social hierarchies. The discourse recognizes the significance of experiences, particularly those of marginalized communities, in shaping knowledge and comprehending social realities. It challenges the predominance of universal theoretical frameworks that might neglect or marginalize the specific experiences of marginalized groups in India.



♦ *Experience is not solely subjective but rather influenced by social structures and historical contexts*

Gopal Guru, a prominent Dalit scholar, asserts that experience serves as a crucial starting point for understanding social reality. According to him, experience is not solely subjective but is influenced by social structures and historical contexts. In his view, theory must be built upon the foundation of experience to gain a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena. However, Guru acknowledges the limitations of experience, recognizing its potential fragmentation and susceptibility to personal biases and prejudices. Thus, he contends that theory should surpass mere experience and strive for a systematic and critical analysis of social reality.

♦ *Dalit experience offers a unique perspective on social reality*

Guru's approach to experience and theory is rooted in his involvement with the Dalit movement in India, which aims to challenge prevailing social structures and hierarchies. He argues that Dalit experience offers a unique perspective on social reality that must be considered in any examination of Indian society. Guru highlights the importance of "experience" as a valuable source of knowledge.

♦ *Gopal Guru challenges conventional social theories on marginal communities*

In his book *"Dalit Women Talk Differently"* (2010), Guru engages in conversations with Dalit women, critically examining their experiences and viewpoints. He challenges conventional sociological theories that tend to generalize the experiences of marginalized communities, advocating for a more nuanced understanding that incorporates the voices and agency of Dalit women. Furthermore, Guru questions the notion of a singular Dalit experience, emphasizing the recognition of diverse lived realities within the Dalit community. He underscores the intersectionality of caste with other forms of oppression, including gender, class, and religion. By acknowledging these intersections, Guru emphasizes the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and struggles of Dalits.

♦ *Social theory must be based on lived experiences of those who face marginalization*

Gopal Guru confronts the traditional sociological theories that tend to homogenize the experiences of marginalized communities. He argues that theory should be grounded in experience and responsive to the perspectives of marginalized groups such as Dalits. Moreover, Guru critiques the idea that theory should be detached from the experiential reality of marginalized communities. He asserts that social theory should be rooted in and responsive to the lived experiences of those who face marginalization.

Guru's work has sparked significant debates and



♦ *He advocates for centrality of experience in shaping social theory and a critical experimentalism approach*

discussions within academia, contributing to the development of Dalit studies as a distinct field of scholarship. His emphasis on the centrality of experience in shaping social theory challenges the dominance of privileged perspectives and calls for a more inclusive and democratic approach to knowledge production. He advocates for a critical experientialism approach that bridges the gap between experience and theory, promoting a critical and engaged approach to social analysis that considers the complexities of social structures and historical contexts.



♦ *Experience is shaped by assumptions and theoretical frameworks.*

Sundar Sarukkai presents a distinct approach to the relationship between experience and theory. He contends that experience is not an impartial starting point for comprehending social reality; instead, it is already influenced by theoretical frameworks and presumptions. According to Sarukkai, theory and experience are intertwined and complexly interconnected. Furthermore, Sarukkai underscores the significance of language in shaping our comprehension of social reality. He posits that language serves not only as a means to express experience but also as a source of meaning and interpretation. Therefore, he asserts that theory must grapple with the intricacies of language and meaning to furnish a more nuanced understanding of social reality.

Sarukkai's approach to experience and theory finds its roots in his engagement with the philosophy of science and mathematics. He argues that studying science and mathematics offers a distinctive perspective on the interplay between theory and experience, as it illuminates how theoretical frameworks shape our understanding of empirical phenomena. Sarukkai contests the notion of a clear

♦ *Sarukkai's approach to experience and theory is rooted in his study of science and mathematics philosophy.*

separation between theory and experience. He believes that theories arise from specific cultural, social, and historical contexts, and our experiences are intimately linked to these contexts. He proposes that theory-building should entail a dialogue between our experiences and the broader theoretical frameworks we encounter.

According to Sarukkai, experiences are not fixed or static; rather, they are molded by social, cultural, and historical factors. He underscores the importance of recognizing the diversity of experiences, particularly in contexts where certain groups, such as marginalized communities like Dalits, have historically been silenced or excluded. Sarukkai advocates for incorporating these diverse experiences into theory construction, asserting that doing so leads to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the world. He also highlights the power dynamics inherent in knowledge production, examining how dominant theories and discourses can perpetuate existing hierarchies and marginalize certain groups. He calls for a more inclusive and democratic approach to knowledge production that acknowledges and addresses these power imbalances. This includes actively engaging with marginalized perspectives, such as the experiences of Dalits, to challenge and reshape prevailing theories.

♦ *Social, cultural, and historical variables shape experiences, which are not static or fixed.*

Sarukkai places great emphasis on reflexivity in engaging with theories, experiences, and social contexts. He argues that being reflexive enables individuals to acknowledge the limitations and biases inherent in their own perspectives and engage in self-reflection. By questioning and scrutinizing their own assumptions, researchers can cultivate a more nuanced and self-aware understanding of the subjects they study. Sarukkai advocates for reflexivity as a means to challenge dominant discourses and power structures. Through critical examination of knowledge production processes and the social and cultural contexts that shape them, researchers can uncover concealed biases and power imbalances. Reflexivity encourages scholars to consider multiple perspectives, particularly those of marginalized groups, and to question the assumptions and frameworks underpinning their research.

♦ *Individuals are able to recognise the limitations and biases inherent in their own viewpoints and self-reflect*



Summarised Overview

Microhistory is an approach in historical research that focuses on studying the lives of individuals or small groups within specific contexts, aiming to provide detailed insights into historical events and social dynamics. It seeks to uncover the intricacies of everyday life and shed light on the experiences of marginalized or overlooked actors.

Environmental history, on the other hand, explores the relationship between humans and the natural environment throughout history. It examines how human activities have shaped ecosystems, how environmental changes have influenced societies, and the reciprocal interactions between the two. Environmental history emphasizes the interconnectedness of human and non-human actors in shaping historical processes.

Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai have contributed to the debates surrounding experience and theory in the context of microhistories and environmental history. Guru highlights the importance of integrating the experiences of marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, into sociological theories. He argues that their experiences of caste-based discrimination and oppression provide valuable insights into power dynamics and social hierarchies. Guru calls for a more inclusive understanding of social dynamics that incorporates diverse experiences.

Sarukkai questions the universality and neutrality of dominant theoretical frameworks, emphasizing the situatedness of knowledge. He advocates for the inclusion of diverse experiences in theory-building and promotes reflexivity in understanding the relationship between experience and theory. Sarukkai's work extends beyond specific disciplines and explores the complexities of experience and the need to challenge dominant perspectives.

Both scholars emphasize the importance of integrating diverse experiences into the production of knowledge. Their work calls for a more inclusive, context-sensitive, and socially aware approach to microhistories and environmental history. By incorporating marginalized perspectives, these approaches aim to reveal overlooked aspects of history and challenge established narratives. Overall, the debate between Guru and Sarukkai highlights the ongoing challenges and complexities of understanding social reality in India. While there is no easy resolution to this debate, it points to the need for ongoing engagement and dialogue between scholars from different disciplines and perspectives.

Self Assessment

1. How does microhistory contribute to our understanding of historical events and social dynamics by focusing on the lives of individuals or small groups?
2. What is the significance of environmental history in uncovering the interactions between humans and the natural environment throughout history?
3. How do the debates between experience and theory, as discussed by Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai, challenge dominant knowledge frameworks in the field of history?
4. Why is it important to integrate the experiences of marginalized communities, such as Dalits, into sociological theories, as advocated by Gopal Guru?
5. How does environmental history shed light on the reciprocal interactions between human activities and the natural environment, emphasizing their interconnectedness?
6. Why is reflexivity important in understanding the relationship between experience and theory, as highlighted by Sundar Sarukkai?

Assignments

1. Select a marginalized community and examine their experiences using a micro-history approach. How does this perspective challenge dominant narratives and shed light on the impact of power structures on their lives?
2. Investigate the environmental impact of a specific historical event or development on a particular region. How did this event shape the local environment and impact communities?
3. Critically examine the debates on experience and theory by Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai.



Suggested Readings

1. William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and Ecology of New England*, Hill and Wang, 1983.
2. Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, University of Chicago Press, 2016.
3. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the worms the Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, John Hopkins University, 1980.
4. Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Harward University Press, 1983.
5. Gopal Guru, *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*, Oxford University Press, 2012.

References

1. Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, Hutchinson, London, 1977.
2. Aram Veesser, *The New Historicism*, Routledge, 2016.
3. Arthus Marwick, *New Nature of History*, OUP, 2001.
4. C Wright Mills, *Sociological Imagination*, OUP, New York, 1959.
5. C. Wright Mills, *Sociological Imagination*, Pelican book, 1973.
6. David Seddon, *Relations of Production*, Frank Cass Publishers, 1978.
7. E Bentley, *A Companion to Historiography*, Routledge Publishers, 1997



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



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