

Introduction tradition
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Introduction

History is an academic discipline which basically aims at giving a critical analysis of various events that occurred or are currently taking place. There has been a notion that history is simply based on rumors and that it relies on story telling. This notion is very wrong because historical knowledge is based on accurate evidence which can be used to prove that something happened due to a particular reason.

For example we can always give reasons to justify the causes of war in our societies. “ History can be divided into socio- economic and political categories” (Stumpf 67). Apart from this type of classification, we also have philosophy of history “ which is the theory aspect of the discipline of academic history, and deals with questions such as the nature of historical evidence, the degree to which objectivity is possible” (MacMillan 34). The philosophical aspect of history gives it some authenticity and it also enables us to critically understand its nature. “ For example, we can compare and contrast history and other disciplines through the study of its philosophy”

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(Dupre 98). Philosophy of history encompasses several elements which governs its analysis. For example it deals with reason and language as some of its elements.

It is therefore imperative to critically analyze the importance of language and reason in history. Language can be defined as “ a systematic means of communicating by the use of sounds or conventional symbols” (Neustadt 89). There are disparities in the characteristics that govern the use of various languages. Reason can be defined “ as an explanation of the cause of some phenomenon” (Neustadt 91). Since history is majorly preoccupied with explaining when events occurred and why they occurred, I therefore contend that both reason and language are important in history.

Importance of Language in History

Language is a very unique development among human beings and it has had much influence on the life of mankind as a whole.

“ For example it has affected the nature of learning various academic disciplines in various institutions” (Dupre 138). There are so many languages in the world today and the popularity of a particular language depends on the number of people that speak it. The importance of language in history can therefore be described as follows. “ The history of a given community can be learned through the study of their language” (Gottlieb 215).

For instance a linguist who may wish to learn particular aspects of a given society may rely on their language. In this case the linguist can study some words which describe a given phenomena. For example words that describe places may help the linguist to examine the migration patterns of a

particular community (Gottlieb 230). In addition to these, the study of words that describe political activities can reveal how a particular community was governed. Language also enables us to articulate our attitudes, feelings, ideas, interpretations, and facts about a given phenomena. For example, one can give his opinions about political structures and developments in his society. This can influence the historical rationalization of such developments. Language also has an effect on our perception, and emotions about events that take place in our society.

For example, the manner in which a person describes a given historical event will definitely affect our feelings about them. The description of the Nazi dream that Germany had may make a person to have a low opinion about Hitler. Nonetheless, if a person justifies Hitler's actions then people will perceive him positively.

Language has always ensured the continuity of history from one generation to the other. For example, oral tradition has been extensively used in the study of several events that took place in the past and it mainly depends on myths and legends of a particular society. These stories are often transmitted through the spoken word and they have very rich historical information. Language also influences history in the sense that it determines the actions to be taken. For example, the recent revolution that we had in Egypt was perhaps successful because people used language to influence each other to demonstrate against the government. The use of language in this context influenced people's actions which culminated to a historical event (Stumpf 890). Even though language has facilitated the development

of historical knowledge and facts, it has also negatively affected the validity of history.

For example, the modification of historical information in the process of translating it may lead to the distortion of the facts we have in history. Most of the historians today extensively depend on secondary sources as their major references, hence the information they get may not be authentic. This is because the people who developed the secondary sources may have added their own opinions to the original ideas. Apart from these, oral evidence also depends on the capacity of the informant to remember what happened. They might therefore give an incomplete account of an event simply because they can not recall every thing that occurred. Importance of Reason in History Reason is another fundamental aspect of philosophy of history and its importance in history can be discussed as follows. " Reason is a mental faculty or ability found in humans that is able to generate non intuitive conclusions from assumptions or premises" (Dupre 120). " Our daily experiences affect the nature of our reasoning hence people reason differently in various parts of the world" (Gottlieb 290).

This eventually leads to various actions which may cause historical events. For example, capitalism and its development has been linked with colonialism, hence through its study we get to understand why Africa and other European countries were colonized. It is through reason that historians understand causes and effects of a person's or a community's actions. The understanding of causes can therefore enable people to remodel their actions hence they can avoid mistakes in future. For example, when we examine the reasons why the people of Tunisia revolted we get to

understand their experiences. Other countries can also use those ideas to correct their political institutions.

For example, the Egyptians also revolted because of what they observed in Tunisia and Yemen. Criticism is one aspect of reason and through it we can question the validity of historical information. “ This would make us understand why something happened in a given manner” (MacMillan 157). Last but more importantly, events cannot just happen without reasons and this point summarizes the importance of involving reason in this domain. For example Iraq did not just attack Kuwait for the sake of it, but they had reasons for their actions. “ Reason is also an important factor in history because through a certain type of reasoning a historian creates a historical record of a certain event in a certain way” (MacMillan 160). Reason has been criticized to some extent by some people who think that it has no role in history. “ These people question whether we can be confident that reason can achieve knowledge of truth better than other ways of trying to achieve such knowledge” (Gottlieb 235).

They also doubt whether it is important to have our lives governed by reasons instead of other factors which may even enable us to have a better life.

Reason and Language

The similarity between language and reason is that they both influence the actions taken by human beings hence they both influence historical events. For example the manner in which you describe a historical event to

somebody will actually influence his perception hence he will have reasons for acting in a given way.

Conclusion

The above discussion reveals the importance of language and reason in the study of history and we can therefore treat them as very critical elements of history. Language should therefore be used to enhance the study of history and historians should be very careful in their choice of words when giving explanations of historical occurrences.

This would enable them to maintain authenticity in this study. This is because language is the key tool used in the study of history and if it is abused then we shall have rumors instead of history. Reason is also very important in historical analysis because it is through it that we get to understand the true nature of history. History can therefore not survive without language and reason.

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