

HISTORY MUST BE TOLD - Draft Transcription

Lectures 1-6

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Feringer notes

Last edited: 5-7-97

1. History today tends to be either ignored as boring, or irrelevant. There are too many "histories", for instance, of science, of a war, or of a culture or country. But ERH suggests there is only one history that has power, that is the history of mankind.

In my view, only such an approach to history gives it power to help us create our future. Too often these "too many histories" are mere recordings of sequences of events, or are put together from a bias that distorts any ability to find truth from past events. (see p. 1-2 with the reference to Schopenhauer which indicates this view).

2. Three points about history: 1) it occurs without regard to our happiness, 2) people conscious of history may be without an academic degree (i.e. not experts), 3) true history is (should be) about changes, about newness. "It is the inheritance of acquired qualities, the transmission of new qualities."(of human society.)p. 1-3

3. It tells us how one thing came into creation, despite all the reasons why it shouldn't. "History then is the story of new creations, or it is nothing." p. 1-5

4. "...history can only consist of the things that cannot be rationally analyzed and deduced..?" p. 1-5 For instance, animals mate because of chemistry. Humans, by contrast never know when it is time to love. "It makes true love all the more miraculous.....History is the sum of the unbelievable things that become believable because they are told." p.1-6

5. For these reasons, the second dogma of history is that it is rather short. History is both new and old; events, at a general level recur, and an recurring sunrise may be the dawn of a new day (for mankind.) Thus, the telling of history is subtle and rife with choices by the story teller. And since the "important" events cannot be rationally deduced or explained, history must be told as a story.

6. From here ERH goes into a discussion of time, past present and future. i.e. The present is in tension between future and past. We have obligations to continue from the past that which should be continued (i.e. democracy, environmental respect etc.), to ignore the insignificant events, and to act to carry on those which must be carried on.

7. The present is the time to act, we can lose time and gain time, past generations have prepared our own future, the future must be constantly re-created by our free choices.
8. In order to maintain our sanity we cannot feel isolated, alone; we must feel we are part of the larger group or society . "What we call `history' then is a sequence of acts that are freely done by people, and then in the end, miraculously fit together." p. 1-13 To the extent that cultures of the world remain fragmented, at war, we will tear ourselves apart as a world. To the extent that there will be some type of unity, we will then have a future.

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Review

Rosenstock-Huessy never gave the same lecture twice, nor taught the same course twice. To have heard him again on the same subject one thus found the same fundamental points, but always with a difference. New examples, a different orientation and in the end the listener experienced, not contradictions but greater depth of understand and respect for the subtleties of the subject. This issue of History Must Be Told covers the basic points about, how we must make decisions and begin action in the present and the thrust of those actions must be toward creation of our desired future, how we must connect ourselves with larger communities so that we do not feel alone in the world. He then goes on the examine how history represents choices which need to be made about what from the past should be forgotten and what must be told if it is to have the power of enlightenment.

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