

The Analysis of Historical Thinking

Haonan Ma, Qingzhong Xu

Shandong Normal University, Jinan, Shandong 250358, China

Abstract. Historical thinking is a method that enables individuals to comprehend and analyze past events and phenomena. It entails contemplating and elucidating the historical context, temporal characteristics, societal milieu, and the impact of various factors on historical occurrences. At its core, historical thinking involves the examination of history from multiple perspectives and dimensions, encompassing politics, economics, society, culture, and more. Through historical thinking, individuals can speculate, deduce historical development trends, and extract insights and lessons from it. This, in turn, offers a valuable reference for contemporary individuals seeking to understand and address current challenges. Moreover, historical thinking fosters critical thinking skills, empowering people to scrutinize authoritative viewpoints and form independent judgments.

Keywords: Historical Thinking; Review; Future Historical Method.

1. Introduction

We all inhabit the continuum of history; we are both its creators and retrospectives. We derive enjoyment from the narrative of history, tracing the course of life from birth to death, exploring our history of consumption, and delving into the ever-turning wheel of space-time. We engage with the history of a dynasty, the tapestry of a civilization, and even the epic narrative of humanity itself, stretching as far as the annals of Earth's history and the vastness of the universe. But what exactly is history? What constitutes historical thinking? And what purpose does history serve in our lives? These questions may appear formidable and abstract at first glance, yet within the realm of human endeavor and contemplation, the concept of history has consistently emerged as significant, with its importance continually affirmed. An increasing number of individuals are now approaching questions with the lens of historical thinking.

For many, history is simply a record of past events. This interpretation of history, to a large extent, reflects the common understanding held by the majority. As an amateur in the field of historical studies, the history I discuss may differ from the meticulous, specialized histories studied by professional historians. The notion of history as "what happened in the past" grounds history in tangible events, an approach that is quite comprehensible. The historical narratives we encounter encompass storytelling, assessment, and judgment. At the heart of these narratives lies the need to comprehend the events in order to assess and reflect upon them. Undoubtedly, historical narration stands as the most immediate mode of historical expression. History books, classical texts, documentaries, and news reports all take the form of historical narratives. However, in my perspective, narration represents only the initiation of the "historical" process or the foundation of history, but it does not encompass the essence of historical discourse.

While it is undoubtedly vital to establish what transpired in the past, often, our exploration of historical events primarily serves the purpose of comprehending not just what happened but why it happened. History is not merely a tool for casual amusement, but a means to delve into the past, incorporating personal reflections into the grand narrative. Without introspection and analysis, history becomes bereft of its true meaning.

2. The Meaning of Historical Thinking

First and foremost, historical thinking is not merely the act of studying history or seeking patterns and rules; its fundamental purpose is to illuminate the path to the future while addressing

contemporary challenges. In essence, historical thinking embodies the process of journeying from the past to the present and on to the future [1].

Historical thinking serves as a method through which individuals can comprehend and analyze past events and phenomena. It involves reflection and elucidation on the historical context, temporal attributes, societal milieu, and the diverse influences shaping historical events. At its core, historical thinking encourages a multidimensional exploration of history, encompassing politics, economics, society, culture, and more. Through historical thinking, individuals can make informed conjectures about the course of historical evolution, extract insights and lessons, and offer guidance for contemporary problem-solving.

Moreover, historical thinking nurtures critical thinking skills, empowering individuals to scrutinize authoritative perspectives and form independent judgments.

3. Facts That Need To Be Admitted in Using Historical Thinking

A. Objectivity of History: History constitutes the objective existence of events that unfolded in the past, unaltered by individual subjective perspectives. It encompasses not only events and individuals but also the broader context, environment, concepts, and numerous other contributing factors.

B. Diversity and Complexity: History is a tapestry of interconnected elements, shaped by multiple influences, rather than being reducible to a single person or event. Effective historical thinking acknowledges the diversity and complexity of historical narratives, avoiding oversimplification and one-dimensional interpretations.

C. Multiple Perspectives: Historical events can be scrutinized and analyzed from various viewpoints, and different individuals may offer disparate interpretations of the same events. A comprehensive and objective understanding of history requires embracing these diverse viewpoints and opinions.

D. Significance of Context: The unfolding of historical events is intrinsically linked to the shaping of their background, including social, political, economic, and cultural factors. Historical thinking should recognize the profound impact of contextual elements on events and account for them.

E. Limitations and Uncertainty: Due to the constraints of historical data and the completeness of available information, historical research and interpretation often entail a degree of uncertainty. Historical thinking should acknowledge the inherent limitations of historical investigation and accept the presence of uncertainty in the historical record.

4. Conditions Required for the Use of Historical Thinking

Historical Knowledge Reserve: Possess a solid foundational understanding of history, coupled with an extensive historical knowledge base. A profound grasp of history is essential to better comprehend past events, their contextual backgrounds, and their far-reaching impacts, thus facilitating the application of historical thinking.

Analytical Aptitude: Demonstrate the capacity to identify and dissect historical events, uncovering their root causes and influences. Historical thinking necessitates the active formulation of inquiries, hypothesis development, and evidence-based, logically reasoned answers.

Holistic Perspective: Exhibit the skill to approach issues from various angles and with comprehensive insight. Historical thinking stresses the examination of problems from multiple perspectives and factors, not limited solely to the events themselves but also encompassing the underlying structures, systems, cultures, and other contributing elements.

Reflective Consciousness: Cultivate self-reflection and critical awareness. Historical thinking calls for individuals not only to objectively understand history but also to engage in introspection and assess their own viewpoints and opinions. Through reflection, people can identify and rectify biases and blind spots, ultimately enhancing the quality of historical thinking.

Imagination Proficiency: Foster the ability to envision and speculate within different historical contexts. Historical thinking mandates the capacity to immerse oneself in the thought patterns, living conditions, and social milieu of a particular historical era, enabling a deeper understanding and explanation of the emergence and progression of historical events.

5. The Core of the Process of Applying Historical Thinking

After acknowledging the facts and meeting the aforementioned conditions, the process of implementing historical thinking becomes evident. It involves clarifying the current objectives, revisiting historical events, and analyzing future development trends to formulate a strategic plan. At the core of this process lies the critical examination of historical events in the context of predicting future trends [2].

However, a superficial review of history, such as merely listing dates and events, does not provide the insights necessary for future analysis. What we require is a more comprehensive and detailed historical review [3]. This is where the concept of 'big data' comes into play. Big data involves using mathematical simulation algorithms to extract implicit insights from historical information, going beyond conventional logic and established patterns. While this approach may seem unconventional in the realm of historical research, it has proven effective in numerous fields.

It's worth noting that big data relies heavily on historical records, and the process of organizing and reviewing this data is, in itself, a form of historical analysis. I present this example to illustrate that our approach to history should encompass more than a mere recollection of past events. In historical thinking, understanding the causes and consequences of events, as well as delving into intricate details and their broader social contexts, holds greater significance than simply acknowledging what occurred.

Through the careful review of history, we gain the essential material, which includes data and structural insights, required for analyzing potential future developments. When assessing future possibilities, it becomes necessary to integrate contemporary data and structures into the calculation.

6. Judgment Based on Historical Thinking

The methodology of future historical research will inevitably evolve in response to changing conditions in the field of contemporary history. While history remains a valuable discipline, the limitations of past historical approaches in addressing new challenges have become evident. As a result, a new generation of historians armed with innovative methodologies may draw upon just two decades of historical data but extract more valuable insights from this relatively short time span than their predecessors did from millennia of history. This ability to analyze information with a focus on the ebb and flow of revolutions and governance renders their work exceptionally pertinent [4].

A. The transformation of research tools promises to revolutionize historical research itself, elevating the significance of history in diverse domains.

B. Previous attempts to identify regular patterns may face discomfort during a transitional period. New research methods will shift from relying on traditional laws to algorithms and data structures.

C. Over the next two decades, profound shifts in social structures are anticipated. The Matthew effect will likely widen social disparities, with most individuals lacking control over production but playing a role in facilitating it through the flow of information.

D. Novel social paradigms will emerge, accompanied by advancements in scientific understanding.

E. Human society itself is in need of a revolution. The unprecedented integration of consumer Internet and industrial Internet will center on human beings, emphasizing the crucial role they play. Social and technological progress necessitate personal adaptation to change.

F. One of the paramount philosophical inquiries of the future will involve redefining the essence and purpose of human existence.

7. Conclusion

I hold the belief that the world is undergoing transformation, driven not merely by individuals, but by the imperative need for new changes. From the past to the future, ample reasons exist to substantiate the presence of significant challenges as well as numerous promising opportunities, which collectively lay the groundwork for a remarkable and transformative cognitive revolution. As a witness to this unfolding historical epoch, I will keenly observe and await its evolution.

References

- [1] Hu, J.Z. (2023). Historical Thinking Classroom --History Teaching Proposal under the Core Literacy, Primary and Secondary School Teacher Training, No.9, 2023, pp. 61-66.
- [2] Yan, X., & Zhou, X. (2022). An Analysis of the Application of Historical Thinking in Introduction Course Teaching, School Party Building and Ideological Education, no. 12,2022, pp. 55-57.
- [3] Chen, F.H., & Chen, H. (2022). Historical Thinking: Connotation, Value and Training Path, Journal of Leshan Normal University, No.10,2022, pp. 29-134.
- [4] Kou, M.Q. (2022). The Requirements of The Correct Use of Historical Thinking, Shandong Social Science, no. 9,2022, pp. 185-192.