

# 1



## Introduction



## 1.1 Questions

1. Discuss the importance of historical knowledge to the Kenyan society.
2. What is the meaning of history and meaning in history?
3. Discuss the value of historical knowledge to society?
4. Discuss as precisely as possible the purpose of history and the value of historical study.

## 1.2 Definition of Philosophy of History

According to Voltaire, philosophy of history is critical or scientific history, a type of historical thinking in which the historian made up his mind for himself instead of repeating whatever stories he found in old books. Voltaire – meant independent and critical thinking. To Hegel it means simply universal world history. Hegel meant thinking about the world as a whole. Nineteenth century festivals – was the discovery of general laws governing the cause of events which was history's business to recount. 19<sup>th</sup> century positivism – it meant the discovery of universal laws.

Philosophy is reflective – the philosophizing mind whole thinking about any object, thinks also about its own thought about the object (thought about thought). Philosophy is concerned with thought itself, and it is also concerned with its relation to the object (object and thought). The philosopher asks – how do historians know? How do they come to apprehend the past? The philosopher is concerned with the events not as things in themselves but as things known to the historian and to ask, what it is about them that makes it possible for

historians to know them. The subject matter of philosophy is the organized and scientific development of self consciousness.

### 1.3 Definition of the Term History

History is a special form of thought. History is a kind of research or inquiry trying to discover what man does not know. Science begins from knowledge of out ignorance (definite thing).

Science is finding things out and in the sense history is science. How does history proceed? History proceeds by interpretation of evidence. Where evidence is documents and historians use them to get answers to questions. Historical procedure or method is interpreting evidence.

History is critical for human self knowledge, it is important for man to know himself/herself as human being. Knowing oneself means knowing what one can do based on what man has done in the past. The value of history is that it teaches man what man has done and thus what man is able to perform.

The term history is not only complex but quite encompassing to elicit an agreed definition. It is also a dynamic discipline making it difficult for historians to agree upon one definition; however, it is generally agreed that history is a Greek word “historia” meaning information or an enquiry designed to elicit the truth. To some, history is “man-his-story” hence, the story of man’s efforts to satisfy his/her craving for an orderly social life to satisfy his/her hope for beauty and knowledge.

A number of scholars have defined the term history as follows:

- Burkhart says “history is the record of what one age finds worthy of note in another.”

- Miller says “the course of life is like the sea, men come and go, tides rise and fall and that is all history.”
- Marc Bloch thinks that “history is the science of men in time.”
- H. G. Wells argues that “history is in essence a history of ideas.”
- E. H Carr proposes that history is an unending dialogue between the present and past.
- Johnson history as “everything that happened... history is the unusual acceptance of man. The materials to be studied are the traces left by his existence in the world, the present ideals, the present social, customs, institutions, language, literature, material products of human industry, physical man himself, remains of man, his thoughts, feelings and actions.”
- Meyerhof defined history as “an account of human activities that move societal significance not everything is recorded. History is defined as the memory of society.
- Arthur Marwick says that “a society without memory or self-knowledge is a society adrift.”
- Levi Strauss argues that “those who ignore history condemn themselves to not knowing the present because historical development done permits us to weigh and to evaluate their respective rotations to the elements of the present, he calls us to imagine how a society would be or would look like of their minds deadened to every recollection by paralytic stroke and the whole world look new” (present founded on the past).
- Cicero argues that “if you do not know what took place before you were born you will remain a child forever”.

## 1.4 What is the Concern of the Historian?

1. History is the study of man. In this sense history dealt with knowledge only when it is associated with mans endeavors and development or achievements.
2. History is concerned with man in time; therefore time factor is the essence of history. Each event in history occurs at a given point on the time scale. Human history is therefore a process of man's development in time. Man has developed from the Stone Age to age of the internet, all this has been in a series of steps relating the story of man in development. Even of one had to study man through theories; the element of chronology cannot be escaped.
3. History is concerned with space, individual, nations, institutions, and groups as studied in their physical and geographical environments.
4. Man is a dynamic way interacts with the environment, out of which arise trends in politics, economics, social and cultural spheres.
5. History explains the present which has gradually evolved from the past, the task of the historian is to study and unfold this evolution.
6. History is a dialogue between events of the past and progressively the future events. Historians study and interpret the past by selecting significant and relevant events as they evolve with the progressive emergence of new goals.
7. History is the study of the story of the growth of human consciousness both in the individual and collectives aspects. Over time man is in the process of self discovery man continues to identify what is suitable to

him in terms of rights and privileges. This important mental consciousness grows and evolves with time. Continuity and coherence are necessary requisite of history; events in history are interlinked in terms of cause, course and effect. No event in history grows out of a vacuum. Events in history arise out of the foundations of previous events. It is probably in mind that S.K. Kocher (1991) concluded that “history is the story of what men and women have done or what they have left for others to enjoy and suffer. People have made fantastic blunders, noble contributions, but regardless of quality of human activity it has given us a legacy of civilization, not always fine and noble but on the whole, it has led us to progress both material and moral.” Therefore, it can be safely concluded that history is about people and not documents of statistics.

## 1.5 Necessity of History

1. Everybody and every society need history. It is an indispensable discipline. Each subject taught has its own history. Its development stating its origin. All need history.
2. Primitive societies need to know their traditions heroic deeds of their ancestors and the way the society has been dealing with various problems.
3. Complex societies (developed societies) need to know their history that is, how did the society manage to develop and their relationship between themselves and their neighbours as well as what other societies do.
4. The central factor in history is man and history assumes that unlike all other animals, man is intelligent and human activities are influenced by motives that persuade people to act. Historians examine what forces were

at play especially social economic and political, forces that precipitated man to act? What made the person act the way he did?

5. The study of history also considers the fact that no human action leaves history in the same way. Every human action generates a motion that changes history that is continuity in history, it is not static, and it develops due to human activity.
6. Historians are very particular on the place that the activity took place and time when that activity took place and who was involved?

## 1.6 Justification for Philosophy of History

History assists in the cultivation of tolerance with different kind of faiths, loyalty and cultures, ideals and ideas. Historical knowledge is practical knowledge; it is philosophy teaching by example.

Histories describe vice and unmask false virtue, exposes error and prejudices. It is more persuasive than all arguments that there is nothing great and laudable than humor and uprightness. History should display episodes of how great men and women for the honor of their country have sacrificed everything of their own for the food of man and society. This would enable society to appreciate the lofty qualities of mind and heart.

It is through the study and by the study of great saints, heroism, reforms legends that people can be made courageous, truthful and moral principled. History fosters national unity, national integration, cohesion and patriotism. The special aim of history is to perpetuate the principles of justice and humanity. These principles control the rise of as nation. History instills patriotism which makes one to love his/her county, its achievement and aspirations. History is

citizenship training. It is through history that we can inculcate history on ones country, pride in it respect for the best national environment and traditions and aspirations. History holds a country (nation) together as a single compact and individual entity. In summary society through philosophy of history does the following:

- Appreciate the value of other people and contribution to civilization.
- Trains the mind to be critical.
- Improves quality of writing.
- History provides pleasure and interest.
- Essential part of our cultural heritage.
- Develops educational skills for example comprehension analysis, synthesis and extrapolation.
- Element in education for world citizenship.
- Makes students into good citizens and loyal supports.
- Learn different cultures for mutual responsibility.
- Foster empathy.
- Contains great literature.