



## The Historian's Point of View



- \* The human observer has to take his bearings from the point in Space and moment in Time at which he finds himself; and he is bound to be self-centered.
- \* The historian's profession, is an attempt to correct a self-centeredness.
- \* Our goal should be to keep the perfect equilibrium between self-assertion and self-renunciation. The middle path is as narrow as a razor's edge.

1



## The Historian's Point of View



- \* The historian's point of view is one of Mankind's more recent acquisitions. It presupposes the taking and keeping of records.
- \* The impulse that moves an historian to study the records of the Past is a disinterested curiosity.
- \* For, when once a human being has recognized that these other human beings had as much right as his own generation has, here and now, to behave as if they were the center of the Universe, he must also recognize that his own generation has as little right as these other generations had to maintain this self-centered attitude.

2



## The Historian's Point of View



- \* The Modern Western philosopher Croce has said that all history is contemporary history and that no history can be anything but this. His meaning is that even a comparatively sophisticated modern Man is still, the prisoner of his own time and place.
- \* Each successive generation sees this identical episode of past history in a new perspective imposed by the transit of this generation's historical position from the position of its predecessors.

3



## Two alternative views



- \* One of these two views sees the rhythm of the Universe as a cyclic movement governed by an impersonal Law.
- \* The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than History; for Poetry tends to express the universal, History the particular.
- \* The other fundamental view sees the rhythm of the Universe as a non-recurrent movement governed by Intellect and Will.

4



## Phenomenological Approaches



- \* In his influential *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1806), Hegel developed the thesis that essence (*Wesen*) is understood through investigating appearances and manifestations.
- \* Hegel's influence is evident in the title of the first significant publication to outline a phenomenological approach to the study of religion in a coherent way, Gerardus van der Leeuw's *Phenomenologie der Religion* (1933)

5



## Edmund Husserl (d. 1938)



- \* *Epoche* involves restraint or suspension of judgment. It has also been referred to as 'bracketing out'.
- \* Eidetic vision relates to the ability to see what is actually there.
- \* Van der Leeuw: The life that is being examined should acquire its place in the life of the student himself who should understand it out of his inner self. This necessitated empathy, ... transposing oneself into the object or re-experiencing it.

6



## Rudolph Otto (d. 1937)



\* *The Idea of the Holy*: This work gained its importance, because of his taking the holy as an autonomous a priori category, as a category of meaning and value.



\* He claimed that the existence of the *numen* (the holy) could be established as a *sui generis* category (to be understood only in its own terms). This argument depended on positing that knowledge comes by virtue of faith.



7



## Two categories of Phenomenologists



\* First, there are those concerned to carry out a descriptive study of religion.



\* The second position engage the phenomenologist directly with the hermeneutical issues. He will be involved not only in identifying the range of the phenomenon but justifying its significance in terms of its importance to what it means to be human.



\* Importance of equal consideration being given to different 'religious cultures'.

8