

Historicity in Thinking

Kuang-ming Wu*

In this essay we consider how indispensable history is for thinking. (A) First, we go the negative route and see how, deprived of memory — historical awareness — we cannot think. (B) Then, we go our positive route, and see how we think only *in* the tradition. (C) But then how should our thinking, which is by nature, universal operate? The question is best tackled by considering concrete universals. And we find, to our surprise, that thinking by concrete universals is thinking that is in history after all, as instantiated by Chinese historical thinking.

A. First we go the sad *negative* route, and see how tragically lost *we* are, how we lose our very identity, become disoriented, de-souled, when we lose our memory, history-awareness — being afflicted with what the psychologist calls Korsakov's syndrome, "a profound and permanent, but 'pure,' devastation of memory."

For movement bespeaks something that moves; self-movement bespeaks the self that lives on, claiming that that whole series of movements is his, or rather he himself who has undergone it, and is now undergoing it, which constitutes *he*. Thus the self is self-movement, which is a history of the self, a biography that is aware of itself, an unspoken (and ever ready to speak) autobiography. The self is an autobiography — a self-conscious story of a life that coheres into a subject, one coherent history. To lose part or whole of it (in a loss of memory, loss of history) is to lose oneself, partly or totally. To lose memory is to lose part or the whole of that history which we call the self. This is the first point.

*Professor of Philosophy, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh.

思考的歷史性

吳光明

摘要

本文論證歷史性是人類思考中不可或缺的重要因素。

全文論述共分三大段：作者首先指出，人一旦去失記憶力，就去失方向感而無法思考，迷失「自我」。這是從消極方面論證歷史意識對思考的重要性；其次，作者指出人的思考只能浸淫在傳統裡始得進行。這是得積極面觀察歷史在思考裡的重要地位。最後作者論證思考的周遍性與歷史的特殊性。這兩者如何合一成爲歷史性的思考呢？要解決這問題，就必須分析「具體的共相」(concrete universals)，本文的分析指出，具體的共相本身就是在歷史裡的思考中。中國思想模式就是這種思考的最古老而最具代表性的傳統。