

## Objectivity in History: An Analysis

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**Abstract.** The controversy as to whether or not historical truth is objective is as old as the profession itself. However the issue became a hotly debated point of contention only after Ranke openly and confidently declared that truth in history was not only objective but achievable. Though initially Ranke's argument found great support from historians all over Europe, and the United States as well, however by the beginning of the 20th century scepticism began to be raised among philosophers and philosophically minded historians on the accuracy of historical accounts written by historians. One of the reasons for this scepticism was the belief that historical explanation was not based on any empirical or scientific methods but rather expressed by the historian based on his personal assumption of what could possibly have happened. As such, it was argued that historical truth could at best be true only relative to the values and needs of the time of the historian who writes it. Due to their emphasis on relativism these critics later came to be referred as Relativists. The debate between the Relativists and those who staunchly believe that history is objective and achievable continues to this day. This article makes a modest attempt to analyse the objections put forth by the Relativists against objectivity to argue that history, indeed, is objective and also achievable.

**Keywords and phrases:** objectivity, Relativists, Ranke, Becker, Beard

### Introduction

In the Preface of his first major work, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations from 1494 to 1514* (1824), Ranke wrote that the job of the historian is to present the past as it had actually happened. To achieve this he had outlined several guidelines that a historian has to adhere to while writing history such as using only validated facts and ridding oneself of prejudices and moral judgments against the object that was investigated. Ranke lamented that in the past history was diverted from its actual purpose and had been used to judge the past so that the future generation would benefit from that. This, Ranke argued, was not the job of history or historians. He cautioned historians against allowing their own judgements in recreating the past lest the degree of objectivity in their work would be compromised. He stressed that only when a historian removed all

traces of his personal feelings and opinions could he ever produce an objective historical work (Boldt n. d., 2–12).

Ranke advocated this view in the first quarter of the 19th century. Since Ranke's view had created a strong impact among historians sometimes it is mistakenly assumed that the effort to write objective history began only since the time of Ranke. But, this is not correct. Actually, the yearning to write objective history had always been a practice among historians since the time of Herodotus himself. Herodotus travelled to almost all the countries involved in the Persian War, including the countries of enemies, and interviewed as many witnesses as possible to ensure that facts presented in his *Persian Wars* were accurate. He had used some kind of critical analysis to ascertain that the information given by the witnesses was true and correct (see Brown 1954, 829–833).

Thucydides, who had actually received inspiration to write history from Herodotus, had also tried to write objective history. His work, the *Peloponnesian War*, was a documentation of a contemporary incident, the Greek civil war, fought by Athens and its empire against the Peloponnesian League led by Sparta. Thucydides chose to write the history of contemporary incident because he felt historians can vouch for objectivity only for contemporary occurrences. He took pain to seek not only as much facts as possible but also to ensure that the facts were true (Brown 1954, 834 and 840). His ingenuity in evidence-gathering, ascertaining the accuracy of the gathered facts and analysing the cause and effect of the *Peloponnesian War* without reference to intervention of the gods had made Thucydides to be regarded as the father of scientific history (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thucydides>).

Ibnu Khaldun, the Muslim scholar who had lived in the 14th century, had argued that unless historians adhere to strict professional ethics it was not possible to write objective history. In the *Muqaddimah*, he criticises the works of several Muslim scholars as lacking in objectivity as they had deviated from the basic principles of history writing. He also, like Ranke, had proposed several principles to be followed by historians to produce objective historical works (see Ibnu Khaldun trans. Rosenthal 1967, 6–68). Thus, it is clear that the concept of objectivity and the urge to write objective truth had already existed among historians since before the times of Ranke.

However, it was only when Ranke endeavoured to promote a scientific method to write objective history among historians controversy arose as to whether history was objective or not. Actually, initially the idea proposed by Ranke succeeded in attracting a large number of historians. Since the mid-nineteenth century, efforts were taken to train historians on the art of writing objective history. Ranke created a scientific model to train aspiring historians in the field of critical

research methods. University students from the United States, for example, had travelled to Germany to study Rankean methods of writing objective history. And, as a recognition of his contributions towards writing objective history, Ranke was appointed as the honorary member of the American Historical Association. In fact, Ranke was the first to be accorded this honour (see Novick 1988, 1–26).

However, Ranke's influence began to be challenged since the beginning of the 20th century. American historians, like Carl Becker and Charles Beard, began to question the ability of historians to write history that could ever be called objective. They argued that there was no absolute truth in history, rather what was presented by historians was their own version of the actual event and that could at best be true only relative to the prevailing needs of the time of the historians. This group came to be known as Relativist later for their staunch believe in relativism (Novick 1988, 166). Similarly, the defenders of objectivity were began to be referred as Objectivists. The view of the Relativists sparked a heated debate among scholars not only from the field of history but also philosophy. Although it is more than a century since this controversy came to the fore, and has been argued out by scholars from both sides of the divide, nonetheless, the issue remains unresolved as ever to this day. This paper endeavours to analyse the merits in the arguments put forth by the Relativists, particularly Becker and Beard, against objectivity in history and tries to show that history, indeed, is objective and it is within the means of any serious historians to write objective history.

### **The Relativists Argument**

Scepticism against objectivity in history began to gain momentum in the United States, since the 1920s, when Carl Becker and Charles Beard started questioning the ability of historians to recreate an event as it had actually happened. To the Relativists, historical interpretation had always been and for various technical reasons shall always remain relative to the historian's time place and purposes (Novick 1988, 166). In his address entitled "What are Historical Facts" at the American Historical Association, in 1926, Becker argued that it was impossible for any historian to present history, even for a simple incident, as it had actually happened. According to Becker, historian chooses what he prefers based on his experience and knowledge and the need of his time and presents that as history. As such, different historians investigating the same event shall come up with different histories as the experience and knowledge and preferences of the historians differ. In short, no history shall be the same for two historians. And, as the values of the society changes with time every generation shall rewrite its history according to the needs of the time. With this argument, Becker,

emphatically disagreed that history could ever be objective (Suntharalingam 1985, 121).

In 1933, in his presidential address entitled "Written History as an Act of Faith" at the American Historical Association, Beard concurred with the arguments of Becker. Beard argued that history was the thought of the present time about the past. He compared history with natural sciences and claimed that unlike in physics or biology where the reality could be presented objectively without any external influences history just reflects the thoughts of the historian who writes it. One of the main reasons for this, he argued, was the inability of the historian to completely detach himself from the object he investigates (Suntharalingam 1985, 123).

To put it in a nutshell, Beard argues that the actual reality does not exist for anyone to rewrite it or make an interpretation on how such and such thing had happened. The historian using whatever traces of that reality that is left behind to reconstruct what he believed could have happened. In doing so the historian visualises the past based on his experience and knowledge and recreates a history that suits the demands of the present. Hence, history is nothing but an interpretation of the past in terms of the need of the present. Based on this arguments Beard drew the conclusion that objective truth in history could never be known.

Perhaps, Becker and Beard were the earliest scholars to have openly challenged the optimism created by Ranke among historians towards writing objective history. Hence, not surprisingly, the views of these Relativists had invited strong criticism from some of the well established historians and philosophers. Maurice Mandelbaum (1967), for instance, in his work *The Problem of Historical Knowledge: An Answer to Relativism*, had brushed aside the arguments of the Relativists as unacceptable. He disagreed with the Relativists' notion that history reflected nothing but the thoughts of the historian. He claimed that the Relativists had failed to differentiate between a "statement" and a judgement. He argued that truth in history was concerned with the statement and not the judgement. The statement and not the judgement that narrates the event as it had actually happened. External factors do not in any way influence the presentation of the statement that explains the event objectively. Mandelbaum also disagreed with the argument that historians were selecting facts to suit their needs. He did not deny that historians select their facts, but, disagreed that this was done to suit their needs. He argued that historian usually does this based on the relevance of the facts to the question he was trying to answer (see Mandelbaum 1967, Chapter 3).

Arthur C. Danto (1968) disagreed with the claim that the inability of historian to detach completely from the object that was being studied was an obstacle to write objective history. He justified his disagreement arguing that the inability to detach from the object was not peculiar to history alone but a *sine qua non* for all empirical research. With that he rebutted Beard's claim that complete detachment was possible in natural sciences. In natural sciences, Danto claimed, the researcher usually begins with a hypothesis and selects only those facts that could support his hypothesis. Hence, not only a kind of attachment exists between the subject and the object but the subjective selection of facts also occurs (Danto 1968, 96–100).

Oscar Handlin (1979) refuted Becker's argument that since the actual reality was not available for the historian to investigate he cooks up a story that suits him based on whatever little traces that had been left behind of that reality. Handlin argued that it was impossible for a historian to recreate an event based on his imagination if the available facts, even if they were too little, did not support the historian's version of that event (Handlin 1979, 1).

E. H. Carr, too, though was espousing a view similar to that of Becker when it came to the definition of what historical facts were, was opposed to the claim that truth in history was not objective. He suggested that objectivity should not be measured based on the degree of detachment between the subject and the object but rather on the relationship between the available facts and the interpretation arrived at by the historian. History has to be accepted as objective if it is supported by the facts presented by the historian (Carr 1964, 119–124).

A much stronger criticism against relativism was put forth by David Hackett Fisher in his *Historian's Fallacies: Towards a Logic of Historical Thought* (1970). Fisher condemned historical relativism as absurd and pernicious as it encouraged anyone and everyone to write whatever he wanted and get away with it by arguing that what was written need not necessarily be true to everyone and at all times. In short, Fisher claimed that historical accuracy has diminished due to the progress of historical relativism (1970, 42).

The debate between the Relativists and the Objectivists that had started at the beginning of the last century does not seem to have an end. It continues to go on even now, though not with the original vigour or vehemence. However, the unceasing questioning of objectivity in history keeps disturbing the serious historians who are genuinely slogging to recreate the past as truthfully as possible within the given limitations. It is just unfortunate that their arguments in defence of objectivity had failed to convince the Relativists. The Relativists are unwaveringly sticking to the conviction that the criticism put forth by Becker and Beard against objectivity holds true then, now and forever.

### **An Analysis of the Relativist Argument**

From the foregoing it is obvious that Both Becker and Beard's scepticism against objectivity is premised on the argument that the past had passed leaving behind very little traces thus making it impossible for anyone to recreate it in its totality. Their justification is that since the actual reality is not there whatever is being presented as history by the historian is nothing but the historian's imagination of the past. Thus, Becker claims, there are two histories: one the actual past and the other the imaginative recreation of the historian. And, the history recreated by the historian could never be what had actually happened but a mental mapping of the historian—"a blend of truth and fancy" (Becker 1931, 222–229). This, the Relativists argue, allows the historian to present a picture that suits the needs of the time the historian lives. Hence, history could only be true relative to the time of the historian.

Becker elaborates this point in his "Detachment and the Writing of History" (1958), arguing that "Someone saw the incident and wrote down like Caesar was stabbed by Senators. When I read the statement a mental picture is formed at once: several men in a room driving daggers into one of their members. But, it's not the statement alone that enables me to form the picture. My own experience enters in. I have seen men and rooms and daggers and my experience of these things furnishes the element of which the picture is composed. The picture changes as I read more of the Roman world" (1958, 10–12). With this, he argues that there is no way whereby one could get to know the actual history of the past. What we get is not what actually had happened but what the historian tells us to have happened.

It is surprising to see a simplistic argument like this coming from a renowned historian like Becker. It is not denied that a mental picture, as Becker claims, is likely to form when one reads or hears of an incident. However, it must be understood that the initial picture that is formed in the mind of the historian, or any one for that matter, on reading or hearing a statement is not history yet. No trained historian shall present that incomplete and unsubstantiated piece and claim it as objective history. Unlike Becker's "Everyman" the historian shall continue to read more and more of all the extant evidences of the event that he tries to explain in order to comprehend fully what had actually happened. That is the obligation of any trained historian. And, that, too, he does not do on an ad hoc manner. He will not attempt to recreate the event based on the predetermined contemporary values or ideas, as Becker argues, but rather would follow the Rankean tradition and will try to understand the event on its own term by "immersing himself in the epoch" in which the event had occurred (Boldt n. d., 3). And, of course, as the historian reads more and more of the available evidences his mental picture continues to improve, not changes as Becker claims,

neering the actual reality. And, he shall start recreating the reality only after this exhaustive research for facts on the event he studies and is convinced that he has comprehended the past in its right perspective.

Obviously, Becker seemed to have confused himself between the "Everyman" that he had accredited as historian and the trained historian. It may be true that "Everyman" can be a historian when history is reduced to, as Becker had done, to mean only "memory of things done and said" (see Becker 1931, 223). But history has a larger meaning than that. And, the fact is, not "Everyman" is trained to write serious history. If "Everyman" is accepted as historian, and worse still, his work as history, obviously, objectivity will remain an unattainable dream.

Beard cites Tacitus as example to support his claim that historians are usually influenced by their personal beliefs and emotions and manipulate history to suit the needs of their time. What Beard writes about Tacitus is true. No doubt about that. It is generally accepted by historians that Tacitus, rather than presenting history as it had actually happened, was more inclined to use his ingenuity to paint a damning picture of the ruling aristocrat (see Usher 1969, 207–214). But then, it looks that Beard has chosen a wrong historian to support his arguments against objectivity in history.

Tacitus was a renowned Roman historian of his time. No quarrel over it. His works give us a good understanding of the history of Rome of his own time and the time before him. And, he also seemed to have begun writing history to present the past as it had actually happened in the traditions of the Greek historians. In the Preface of his *Histories* (109 AD), for instance, he wrote, "...but partiality and hatred towards any man are equally inappropriate in a writer who claims to be honest and reliable." But then, he had drifted away from this noble principle when he set to write the *Annals* (117 AD), documenting the history of the Julio-Claudian emperors, more especially of Tiberius. He began his *Annals* writing "This I hold to be the chief office of history, to rescue virtuous actions from oblivion, and to make men fear the infamy which posterity will surely attach to vile words and deeds." He had all the facts and figures in his disposal to *rescue virtuous actions* of the Julio-Claudian rulers *from oblivion*. But he did not make use of them. Rather, he chose to rely on unsubstantiated tales and hearsay that suited his need—to cast aspersions on the character of the Julio-Claudian emperors. Thus, not surprisingly, his *Annals* is being criticised as portraying the "expression of anger and resentment of four generations of frustrated aristocrats" and not history (Usher 1969, 208). Even Becker describes Tacitus as the "disgruntled Roman" (Becker 1958, 47). Hence, using Tacitus' works to argue against objectivity in history does not do justice to the serious historians who continue to strive to recreate the past as accurate as possible.

Rather, the works of the great Greek historians like Herodotus and Thucydides should have been analysed for this purpose.

Herodotus is honoured as the father of history while Thucydides is acclaimed as the first scientific historian. They are honoured not only for being the earliest to write proper history but more importantly for their contributions to the art of history writing that keeps motivating historians to these days with the belief that the human past could be recreated as it had actually happened. As mentioned earlier, Herodotus took the trouble to visit almost all the states that were involved in the Persian Wars in his effort to seek as much evidences as possible to write the history of that war. It took him several years to do this. He also took pains to verify the veracity of the facts that he had collected before organising them in a coherent manner to give us the story of the Persian War (see Suntharalingam 1987, 11–20). Thucydides did it even better, and had given us the history of the Peloponnesian War. The objectivity of these works had never been questioned, though for a brief period during the Roman times Herodotus' work was subjected to some criticism (see Brown 1954, 840–841). It may also be noted here that neither Herodotus nor Thucydides had allowed their own feelings to dictate what they wrote. They also did not write merely to satisfy the expectations and the needs of the society they were living in then. In fact, Herodotus was criticised by his own people for not being patriotic in his writing for he had praised the virtues of the "barbarians" while reproaching some of the Ionian leaders for their treachery during the Persian Wars (Suntharalingam 1987, 28; Brown 1954, 842).

Beard's unyielding arguments to prove that written history was true only relative to the historian's time looks as though he was making an attempt to give justifications for his own work that had been decried vehemently in the US. Using Marxist approach, he had, in his *Economic Interpretation of the American Constitution* (1913), tried to argue that the founding fathers of the US were driven by economic interests rather than philosophical considerations in framing the US Constitution. According to Peter Novick (1988, 96), Beard's work was condemned not only as "libellous, vicious and damnable but also as filthy lies and rotten aspersions." Of course, Beard could argue that what he had written was true relatively. But, unfortunately, his interpretation was rejected even at his own time and by his own people. It is possible that the aversion the Americans had against Marxism could have been the reason behind this aggressive rejection. Even Becker was not spared. He was severely criticised for espousing pro-Communist views and was forced to substitute the term "Marxism" with "so-called scientific socialism" in his works (Novick 1988, 199). The problem here is not so much on the perspective that a historian uses but allowing preconceived ideas to influence the interpretations he makes in his works. It's not clear whether Beard had begun his interpretation of the US Constitution as a neutral and truth seeking historian or started off with the preconceived Marxist hypothesis that all



human activities were decided by economic considerations, and had tried to prove that the framing of the US Constitution was no exception to that theory.

Nevertheless, the Relativists continue to argue that different historians tend to see history in different perspective and due to this the truth in history is not absolute but keeps changing. It is not denied that there is some truth in this notion. The Greeks and the Romans gave importance to war and politics in their writings. During the middle ages the focus was on determining the hidden agenda of the God in all human activities. Ranke's emphasis was more on politics and diplomacy, while Marx saw history as the result of class struggle (see Marwick 1989, 31–52). But, should viewing history in different perspectives reduce the degree of truth in history? Not necessarily. In history, using different approaches is not only unavoidable but something that is encouraged, too, as the explanations derived from different perspectives enable a deeper and wider comprehension of the past. In the history of India, for instance, for a question as to why did India become economically backward under the British rule even though the British had introduced modern economy, there are at least three different explanations by three renowned historians. Romesh Chunder Dutt (1960, x–xiv, 257–161), for instance, argues that the British had intentionally destroyed all the Indian industries to rid competition from them and at the same time to convert India from an export oriented economy into a market for the products of England. D. R. Gadgil (1971, 17–18), however, claims that the Indian industries had suffered natural death as they were unable to compete with the technologically superior competitors from Yorkshire and Lancashire. Whereas, Barrington Moore (1966, 370) argues that the British had created conducive climate for economic growth in India by improving transportation, communication and irrigation facilities, but the failure of the Indians to grab those opportunities to participate actively in the economic endeavours had made India to lag behind in industrialisation.

The three explanations given above may seem to be contradicting each other and hence strengthen the argument in favour of relativism—what is true to one historian is not so to another. But, on a critical analysis of the three answers it can be shown that they are not contradicting but complementing each other. Romesh Dutt did not make an unsubstantiated statement when he claimed that the British had executed a gradual plan to close down all the industries that had existed in India then. He had provided ample authentic evidences, gleaned from the official records of the English East India Company (EIC) and the British Parliament, to substantiate his thesis. These records show without any doubt that special instructions had, indeed, been given to the EIC officials to take whatever actions they could to hasten the closure of the existing Indian industries and curb the growth of any new ones. In the light of these evidences, could anyone with some basic training in writing history argue that Romesh Dutt's version of history

is not objective? In fact, Moore (1966, 344–348) himself agrees that there was a concerted effort by the EIC to impede industrial growth in India.

Similarly, Gadgil's argument, too, cannot be rejected as unfounded. It is based on the Darwinian principle of the survival of the fittest. With the advent of the mightier British industries the Indian manufacturers gradually folded up their businesses. Though it may be argued why the government of the day didn't take any proactive actions to protect the weaker Indian industries against the onslaught of the British Industries, which any responsible government is duty bound to do, the fact remains that what Gadgil has put forth has truth in it. It cannot be brushed aside as something invented by Gadgil to satisfy the needs of his time.

And, the argument of Barrington Moore, too, is not without any basis. No one can deny that there was vast infrastructural improvement in India under the British rule. But, whether or not that was sufficient enough to lure the Indians to participate and contribute positively to the economic growth of India has to be analysed before admitting the merits in Moore's hypothesis. Nevertheless, it is wrong to argue that the version of history presented by Moore is a mental map—a creation of his imagination—that could at best be true to him and his time only. As has been said above, all the three explanations should be accepted as fragments of the larger reality and each of these is true and complementing each other. In essence, that is what history is all about.

To ensure that historians do not slither away from presenting the true past, Marwick (1989) suggests that the approach a historian chooses should not be decided based on the historian's preference but the problem that has to be solved. One approach may be suitable for one type of problem while another for a different type of problem. A historian may choose any one approach or a combination of several approaches depending on the question that has to be answered but without giving exclusive privileges to any one approach (Marwick 1989, 25). In this respect, it is well to note here that using a particular perspective will not impede the attempts of a historian to write objective history if his allegiance is solely to the facts of history and presenting them as truthfully as possible. Only when a historian shifts his allegiance from presenting the truth to any particular ideological considerations or political thoughts or any other outside authority and find ways to please them would he get drifted away from presenting objective history. If the works of the priestly historians of the middle ages are not accepted as objective history it is not because their focus was on trying to prove the supremacy of their religion but the method that they had used to write history, which is considered as not scientific at all. As Collingwood (1978, 56) puts it, the Christian historians did not use any critical analysis to ascertain the veracity of the documentary evidences they had used to write

history. It is obvious that their aim was not to present history as it had happened but to distort it to suit the needs of their religious calling (see Marwick 1989, 30–31).

The argument of Becker, equating the historian's inability to know the total reality to his inability to knowing the objective reality of the past at all, also looks to have been placed on a misconceived idea of what history is. Becker tries to reinforce this argument by citing the 49 BC crossing of the Rubicon by Julius Caesar. He argues that crossing of a river is not at all an important event. Yet, it has been accepted as history and is being passed on from generation to generation as a significant occurrence in the Roman history because it has been made out to be one by the historian using the figment of his imagination. Even in that, the story remains incomplete and partial only. The historian has given us only that little fragment of the past that he felt significant and not the entire past. This, Becker argues, is because it is not within the means of any historian to know the total reality. Hence, the history that is given to us by the historian is nothing more than the historian's mental fabrication of what he believes ought to have happened and not what had actually happened (see Becker 1958, 43–57).

Again, the argument of Becker that it was humanly impossible for the historian to get to know the total reality of the past is not denied. But, is that the job of the historian? No historian would ever endeavour to present the total reality. Since the time of Herodotus historians have been trying to document specific occurrences only which they felt were significant. Yet, in all these there is a real past and the historian is trying to explain how and why that particular event had occurred. Neither Herodotus nor Thucydides and not even any of the great Roman historians had ever tried to present the total reality of the past. In fact, no one knows what the total reality is! Even for a simple incident that may happen now, right in front of everyone's eyes, no one will be able to capture the total reality. What is reported in the press and other Medias, and even in the government gazettes, too, cannot justifiably claim to be portraying the total reality. Under such circumstances, expecting historians to recreate the total reality of the past as a precondition to objectivity is a little too farfetched. And, arguing that the inability of the historians to do that undermines the objectivity of the history presented by them is unacceptable. It has to be understood that not knowing the total reality is not the same as not knowing the reality at all. What has to be scrutinised in any historical work is not whether the total reality is presented or not but whether what has been presented is corroborated fully by verified evidences and whether or not the historian has managed to free himself from any external influences during the process of recreating that particular human past. That aside, just because the historian has shown only a fragment of the past, that, too, something that he believes to be significant, it does not mean what he has produced is not true. He did not create it. It is something that had

actually happened and exists independent of the historian's interpretation. It is a part of the larger actual reality that the Relativists argue and not an invention of the historian. Hence, it is unreasonable to argue that that fragments of the real past that the historian has recreated is not true or true only relatively.

### **Conclusion**

It looks like the argument against objectivity in history, at least much of it, stemmed from the misconception on the meaning and practices of history. It is grossly unreasonable to compare history with the natural sciences and expect a complete detachment from the object that is being studied. It is not denied that the historian is a prisoner of the age and society he lives in, and the danger of he becoming a victim of ideological considerations, political thoughts, nationalistic fervours, patriotic zeal and so on is imminent. But, that does not mean a complete detachment is a must for writing objective history. A trained historian is able to handle this hitch effectively as he is aware of these distractions. That aside, a complete detachment, though it could never be possible, shall never entail the writing of any meaningful history. Becker (1910, 534), himself concedes that "detachment would produce few histories, and none worthwhile, for the really detached mind is a dead mind." Thus, the argument that history could be accepted as objective only when the historian detaches his experience, knowledge and feelings completely from the history he writes is not sustainable. A historian needs all these resources to be able to analyse and comprehend the actions of the human in the past in its right perspective.

In conclusion, let it be said that objectivity in history is achievable if historians seriously endeavour to work for it. It is not denied that there are historians, like Tacitus, who allow their personal feelings to dictate them while trying to recreate the past. For them history has other uses other than presenting the past as it had actually happened. But, then there are also those who despite the pessimism sown by the Relativists continue to strive to write history with the strong conviction that history is objective. They look upon the traditions of Herodotus and Thucydides as the guiding principles in their pursuit to recreate the true past. And, as Peter Novick (1988, 2) has put it, if a historian works as "a neutral or disinterested judge and never degenerates into an advocate or even worse, propagandist" he could definitely be able to write objective history.

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