

B O O K R E V I E W

Adriano GALLIA
LA STORIA, SCIENZA DELL'UOMO
Fondamenti e pratica dell'insegnamento storico
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Adriano Gallia (Milan, It.) is well-known to many of us as one of the founding fathers of this Society as well as an assiduous visitor of our congresses (until a few years ago). He is seventy now, retired but still active as an authoritative publicist on matters of history didactics. His works are, alas, not widely known outside his own country since his always writing in Italian : *L'Oriente. Una introduzione al mondo orientale*; *Stati, popoli, culture* (a textbook for secondary schools in three volumes); *Documenti di Storia*; *Sapere storico e insegnamento della storia*. The present work too is in the author's vernacular. If I, as a non-Italian, am allowed to say so, Gallia writes very well, in a very clear style. Nevertheless, while reading I also asked myself whether an important work like this one should not be written in English. It also struck me that nearly all the literature cited and used by the author is in Italian; almost all works by non-Italians are quoted in translation. Is present-day Europe somewhat more 'provincial' still than we believe it to be?

The title of the book, 'History. The Science of Man', gives an indication of Gallia's basic philosophy. History to him is a 'science'; I don't think most modern historians would agree with him in this. They have ever more become convinced that the laws, methods, and basic ideas operating in mathematics, physics, biology, and so on, are not valid, and rather counterproductive, in historical work. Furthermore, Gallia's history is a science of 'man'. This points into the direction of an anthropological approach which is certainly not absent. But as far as I know Gallia, it still more gives expression to a humanistic viewpoint. With all our quantitative, sociological, analytic, etc. approaches such a one is rare in our days but nevertheless very welcome since it situates itself in a long and venerable tradition.

The author's humanistic stance has a Catholic colouring; Gallia never made a secret of the fact that he is a practising Roman-Catholic. This deep conviction here and there surfaces in the book without in the least of making it a work of apologetics. Most neo-Marxist authors have been far less sparing of their ideas! One should not expect a work of Christian polemics either.

The subtitle 'foundations and practice of history teaching' makes it clear that we have to do with a book for history teachers, students of history, and didacticians. Although the

word 'practice' figures in the subtitle, 'La Storia' is not a handbook for teachers but should be characterized as an attempt to present the foundations of practice rather than showing to which practices the description of the basic ideas must lead. On the other hand, this is not a 'theoretical' work of the bad sort, written by someone with little or no experience with classroom work. On the contrary, Gallia has his massive practical experience of teaching behind him and makes good use of it. He fosters no illusions about the state of history teaching (and of didactics) in his country nor about the abilities of the teachers (who lack practical training and theoretical insight) or about the possibilities and capacities of the pupils. I am pleased to note that sometimes even is transpiring what I use to call 'educational cynicism', a stern refusal, based on long acquaintance with teaching, to be taken in by the illusory ideas of outsiders.

Nevertheless, this is an optimistic book. Gallia believes that, given expert training and guidance, teachers (don't shoot at them, they do their best) could make their work far more effective. With regard to the pupils, he rightly assumes that, with sensible methods of work, they could profit much more from history teaching.

The book opens with a very clear exposition of the tendencies in modern historiography in which the author shows himself well read, to proceed with the educational exigencies following from this; next comes an interesting section on the way the historical world is explored in school. Aims and objectives receive ample attention, just as the difficult problem of the selection of the contents. There are four long chapters on the methods of presenting history in school : the narrative one (with an opening section on the current discussion on the value and significance of narrativity), the documentary one (use of sources), the audiovisual one, and the way of theoretical deepening.

This may show that the humanistic approach of Gallia does not mean that he is being old-fashioned. On the contrary, one of the great assets of the book is that it introduces Italian history teachers to the methods that have been developed in Britain and Germany in the last decades. Gallia champions a massive use of sources and strongly advocates the 'exemplarist' ('exemplarische') method. This delights me. I have always remained convinced that this method is the only solution to the problem of the over-abundance of historical material; the discussion of the sixties, mainly in Germany, on the merits and practice of exemplarism was suddenly broken off without having reached a conclusion. One of the failed revolutions that are characteristic of modern history! Teachers should put far more faith in the ability of their pupils, the younger ones not excluded, to work with sources.

Chapters on the means of history teaching follow, the textbook, the history room, and so on. There are also 'operative proposals' for the development of annual plans, and, interesting and highly practical, for the construction of test papers, oral presentations, and examinations.

A chapter on history teaching in primary school and on the teaching of contemporary history and civic education (a must, according to Gallia) conclude the book.

On the whole, I found this fine work more 'meditative' than really practical. I don't want to be misunderstood. With Gallia, I would very much like to see that the history teacher would lay aside for a few hours his corrections and his preparations, and, instead, meditate on what he or she is doing. In this he or she will find a safe guide in 'La Storia'; it helps him to meditate as near to practice as possible; it opens new vistas, it subjects him to some criticisms, and makes him acquainted with the results and products of history didactics in other countries. But knowing history teachers as well as Gallia knows them, I feel that they would ask for this book to be accompanied by a practical manual, a volume that would provide him with examples and materials. I think this would really satisfy him or her and considerably enhance the value of classroom work. It is a pity that the book carries no general index.

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