Loss, Fatalism and Choice: The Moral Component in the Narratives of Polish Dissident Historians in the 1980s. The Cases of Krystyna Kersten and Jerzy Holzer

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Abstract

This article discusses the moral dimension of history writing in the opposition milieus during the last decade of the Polish People's Republic (PRL). It focuses on the works of two dissident historians who dealt with untold or contested aspects of Polish contemporary history: Krystyna Kersten and Jerzy Holzer. First, the essay describes the narratives about the values and experiences shared in the PRL context by people belonging simultaneously to the intelligentsia, opposition dissidence, and academia (professional historians), with a special emphasis on the discovery and search for the truth under positivistic premises. Secondly, it analyses the counterfactual questions posed by Kersten and Holzer in their bestseller underground books about post-war politics and the trade union Solidarity's legal period, respectively. The reflections that these two scholars developed about pasts-that-didn't-take-place provided a complementary ethical component to their discourses concerning decision-making processes and Polish society's political agency. The idea of losing, the ultimate inevitability of defeat, and the way that defeat was faced in two different moments of Poland’s recent history are tackled by Kersten and Holzer with an educational goal: to explain to readers that, however minute the range of choice is, ethics, together with remembrance, plays an important role in social consciousness and empowerment, and hence can make a crucial difference in the long run.

Keywords

opposition in the Polish People’s Republic; 1980s; history writing; ethics; Krystyna Kersten; Jerzy Holzer

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The pilgrim story begins in England in the 16th century. A congregation of religious dissidents in Nottinghamshire believed the Church of England did not act in accordance with the teachings of the Bible so they established a church of their own in 1606. At that time the church and state were one, so being a separatist was considered an act of treason. The congregation had no choice but to leave their motherland. They fled to the city of Leiden in Holland where they could worship as they liked. Atlantic. The crossing was smooth at first but then came many storms, which damaged the ship. Two pe

In addition, Kant thought that moral philosophy should characterize and explain the demands that morality makes on human psychology and forms of human social interaction. These topics, among others, are addressed in central chapters of the second Critique, the Religion and again in the Metaphysics of Morals, and are perhaps given a sustained treatment in Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View. Further, a satisfying answer to the question of what one ought to do would have to take into account any political and religious requirements there are. Each of these requirement turn out to be, ind

The type of class you were in also had a big impact on Victorian morality. Later on in the era, new values and standards started to emerge for example distinctiveness as a character. Also, the proposal of a self-made man was widely accepted and acknowledged during the Victorian era. So the Victorian upper class held the following values: – The Elite saw themselves as the father of the family of society, therefore it was their duty to take care of the society. – The upper class felt it was their role to hold their heritage and traditions. – They intended to remain wealthy for the rest of their