



Big Research Questions about the Human Condition

A Historian's Will

By Arne Jarrick

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The book is a manifesto-like essay aiming to redress some globally present drawbacks characterizing current research in the humanities: 1. Fragmentation and thematic volatility; 2. A reluctance to acknowledge that humanities research is a truth seeking enterprise as all scientific research; 3. A certain unwillingness (or inability) to ask clear questions and to provide distinct answers to these questions. The book consists of three parts: A. Introduction, where the problem and the purpose of the book is presented; B. six chapters, each presenting a certain topic that I suggest that humanist scholars gather around with sustained efforts; C. Conclusion with some words of how to proceed and a section discussing what the humanities or should and are not or should not be.

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List of Illustrations; Acknowledgements; I: Questions and Answers – Background, Motivations and Aims; Ii: Suggested Questions; 1: What Explains That Some Kinds of Knowledge Are Widely Accepted Whereas Other Kinds of Knowledge Are Rejected?; 2: Why Do Some Societal Processes and Phenomena Develop in a Circular or Repetitive Way Whereas Other Processes Evolve Along a Cumulative Trajectory?; 3: Why Do Social Norms Change, Despite the Fact that their Mission is to be Sustained? What Role Do Non-Conformist Individuals and Minority Groups Play in Cultural, Cognitive and Normative Change?; 4: Does a Gradual Extension of Our Lifespan (and the Rise of Welfare) Imply a Growing or Declining Ability to Postpone the Satisfaction of Our Needs and Desires?; 5: What Explains the Widespread Diffusion of Inequality and the Gradual Emergence of Egalitarianism Over the Centuries?; 6: Why Do People Appropriate Aesthetic Experience (Both as Producers and Consumers of Cultural Manifestations), and What Are the Individual and Societal Functions of Such Experiences?; What Lies Ahead?; Appendices; Notes; References; Index.

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