

Elsa Marmursztejn

Reason in the History of Persecution: Observations on the Historiography of Jewish-Christian Relations from the Perspective of Forced Baptisms

Forced baptism, as a long-lasting instance of the persecution of Jews in Western societies, has been a highly controversial historiographical issue. Taking into account the risks involved in such a stance—as being a “lachrymose conception of Jewish history” and advocating “teleological,” “anachronistic,” “judiciary” views—this article deals with the historiographical trends which, ruling out the “persecuting society” paradigm and systematically minimizing the part played by religious factors to explain the forms of persecution, have resulted in specific works on historical causality and temporality. Two situations (the first Crusade in 1096 and the Crusade of the Pastoureaux in 1320) enable us to observe the mechanisms of rationalization in this new history of persecution, and show the diversity of its objects and approaches.

Valérie Theis

John XXII and the Expulsion of Jews from the Comtat Venaissin

In the early 1320s, the Jewish populations of the Comtat Venaissin were expelled from this territory by its ruler, Pope John XXII. This episode has often been linked by historians to the French king’s policy on the Jews. However, no study has described in a satisfactory manner the way in which this expulsion was carried out, or the reasons why the Papacy broke with the longstanding doctrine of the necessary protection of Jews, which had prevailed since the bull *Sicut judeis*. Although the question was given some attention by Carlo Ginzburg in *Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath*, the historiography has long been dominated by the idea that the Popes, unlike secular rulers, never failed to protect the Jews. This article revisits this story. Using unpublished accounting documents, it proposes a more precise chronology of events leading to the expulsion, and an explanation of the way the forced sale of Jewish belongings was carried out. This leads to a new interpretation of this reversal of Papal policy, diverging both from an idealized history of the relations between Jews and Christians and from that of the rise of persecution mentalities, and embedded in the context of the building of state structures and the development of the arts of government.

Claude Calame

Referential Verisimilitude, Narrative Necessity and the Poetics of Vision: Classical Greek Historiography between the Factual and the Fictional

In Classical Greece, the first forms of historiography sprung from a preoccupation with memory: to memorialize and publicize the actions of men in the recent past. They also aimed to make sense of those actions: the order of human and territorial justice for Herodotus, and the anthropology of domination for Thucydides. In this discursive “shaping” of History, rhetoric played an essential role. It provided an opportunity to muse about modalities of “fiction,” which, etymologically, “makes” hence “fictionalizes” facts, and an opportunity also to think about the importance of verisimilitude in the narrative constructions torn between internal coherence and external references. Hence the oxymoron of “referential fiction.”

Marta Madero

Interpreting the Western Legal Tradition: Reading the Work of Yan Thomas

Yan Thomas’ work has had a profound impact on recent research in the field of legal history. Two core beliefs drove his work: first, a deep aversion to doctrinal readings and an equally deep commitment to casuistry; second, his belief that fiction, a technique characteristic of Roman law, is the key to understanding the Western legal tradition. This article traces a path through Thomas’ work, addressing his major lines of thought that highlight both the specificity of law, and the possibility of a renewed dialogue with the social sciences.

Stéphane Van Damme

Mathematical Meditations: Revisiting Moral Practice in the Sciences of the Classical Age

To what extent did scholars use science to pursue the good life in the seventeenth century? How to articulate the Scientific Revolution with ethical questions? These are the questions at the core of the investigation led by the historian of science Matthew Jones in his book *The Good Life in the Scientific Revolution*. At first glance, his project is simply an extension of research on the social history of truth that has encouraged historians for two decades to decipher the moral norms that gave credit to the use and production of scientific knowledge. Civility, politeness, honor led to specific research that highlighted the cultural and social context surrounding the practices of scientific innovation in the Classical Age. This book deepens these questions by asking how mathematical practices were considered moral reflections. This article will discuss the contribution of this book by first examining the three attempts at experimenting mathematical morals led by Descartes, Pascal and Leibniz. The article then shows how Matthew Jones successfully draws on the work of Pierre Hadot by considering mathematical exercises as spiritual exercises. In a third broader step, the article examines how the book exemplifies a return of the moral issue in Anglophone history of science in the last twenty years while the French classical epistemology has avoided this kind of questioning. The article argues that these approaches open up avenues of research for historians to better understand the relationship between science and passion, science and spirituality, and more largely science and religion in the early modern period.

Markus Messling

Philology and Racism: On Historicity in the Sciences of Language and Text

The philological turn in textual scholarship is rooted in the critique of literary theory and the search for objectivity in the understanding of texts. But if the idea of focusing on the immanent structures of texts has been at the origins of modern philology, problems of meaning and translation produced a surplus during the course of the nineteenth century that can be described in terms of cultural hermeneutics. Thus historical philology emphatically widened its praxis toward cultural understanding. Edward W. Said and followers have explored the implications of this in relation to the constituting of European discursive hegemony. If the return to philology is not to be the nostalgic expression of regret at the ongoing decline of classical scholarship, it must take this past into account. Analyses that have focused on the problem have been driven primarily by the experience of civilizational failure and have elaborated a model of the discursive production of power. But how can philology possibly develop perspectives about its status and praxis within contemporary debates if it continues to neglect the heterogeneity within its own historical discourse? The article sets out to identify and analyze traces of resistance against the imperial cultural model of historical philology.