**Should key events in the historical development of areas of knowledge always be judged by the standards of their time?**

**Word Count:** 1561

Standards of history change based off of the societal consensus which is present. For example, when analyzing history, a dilemma arises that deals with the modern interpretation of historical affairs and how their implications shaped the world. Some argue that history can be judged universally as the standards of their time fundamentally have the same principles as any modern values, while others argue that it would be unfair to judge history based on modern standards because cultures are constantly learning and progressing. By looking at Areas of Knowledge such as the arts, ethics, and natural sciences, there are prominent progressions which have been made or discovered which prompt universal standards to change. It would be an injustice to look at history through a modern perspective only after establishing that the standards throughout different points in history are intrinsically different than those today. Through judging historical occurrences and alterations of standards, historians are prompted to look at the societal expectations along with accessible information, providing a larger understanding of the time period and the ways which the occurrences affected future events.

Looking at history itself, there have been progressions in the documentation of history and language which allow for more detailed primary sources, advancing the information present to historians. However, although documentation of historical events are different, that does not mean that the validity to these sources are any less accurate because it was recorded to its fullest potential. An example being the Ancient Egyptian writing system of hieroglyphics. Hieroglyphics were used between the period of around 3200 BC to 300 AC (Grimal, 1994) and were utilized to tell both folktales and modern events. The history recorded through these ancient pictures were the culturally universal system which had been adopted for documentation and communication, much like smartphones in the 21st century. Although the reason of use for both hieroglyphics and digital technology has been the same, the utilization of the smartphone throughout history has allowed for a more detailed testimony to current events. Nonetheless, it would be a disservice to deem that the hieroglyphics were any less valuable than the information recorded through modern 21st century technology because the standards of devices utilized by technology has risen and become more accessible. If anything, looking at history, hieroglyphics and smartphones serve the same purpose, as they allow for the most effective way of communication for their time periods.

Still looking at history as an Area of Knowledge, the question is raised regarding what value language and its developments have had. Language is ever progressing, encompassing new definitions and words that are incorporated into society and are culture specific. If a culture has not found a reason to use a word to describe something, that word simply does not exist. This affects history because if an event, or something similar to that event, has not yet occurred, there is no reason that history and the documentation of it would be able to describe it. For example, Western Imperialism has shaped history dramatically and is noted in three waves, the first of which being in the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries. Although imperialism had been around prior to that in the Americas by European powers, the destruction of native cultures in the America’s was undeniably a key historical event. Although, as the spread of westernization was advancing, Western culture didn’t see this destruction of indigenous life as dehumanizing, but rather liberating as it gave opportunity to prosper. The indigenous people had not experienced anything remotely close to this imperialistic nature prior to the entry of Western European countries into the America’s, so their history and language prior to this had no knowledge of this concept. With this westernization, entire native civilizations became extinct along with their language and cultures. The indigenous people and their culture’s advancements are scarcely recorded because of this imperialism while Western traditions became the forefront to the America’s development. However, the minimal information and knowledge that is available for modern interpretation should not be disregarded as they tell an important perspective on the leading historical event. The language which has developed from the movement of Western civilization into the Americas such as the term “imperialism” has allowed history to be analyzed more objectively as it is forced to realize what effect cultivation of different areas has on the indigenous presence, an item that was not available during the first wave of Western imperialism.

Tying into history, the AOK ethics should be accounted for before judging different historical events. Ethics, much like history, is ever progressing and learning from mistakes. While historical occurrences can still be viewed as detrimental in a modern implication, the standards which were present during these instances must be analyzed objectively and without modern input as it must be known that standards have changed to accommodate societal progression. However, how exactly does ethics affect the way which history is viewed? The WOK’s emotion and reason play a leading role in the progression of ethics throughout history and the changing standards which provide to the argument that historical events must be defined by the standards of their time rather than through modern standards. Emotion is provoked and allows societal evolution through the reaction of the general public to a development. Reasoning is the analyzation of the effects of the event which has occurred, allowing society to weigh the pros and cons. An example of the development of ethics throughout history which should be judged on the standards of its time rather than in modern perspective are the Crusades. The first Crusade occurring in 1095 from Pope Urban II’s orders to force Christianity onto the Muslim population in the Holy Land (Ali, 2003) undoubtedly was detrimental to the Muslims however the standards of the 11th century called for enormous religious sanctity and Christianity just happened to be the most powerful out of present religious identifications. The massacre of an uncountable number of people through the Crusades should be judged on the standards of its time which was the normalization of mass slaughter as it did not contradict with the general public’s emotions on said incident. However, as history progressed and the Crusades came to an end, they began to be viewed as a more dehumanizing action as different, more peaceful, ways of imposing beliefs on others arose and reasoning deemed that the ethics used during the massacre of the Muslim population in the Holy Land was no longer applicable.

Finally, the progression of natural sciences through history proves why history should be judged on the standards of its time rather than by modern standards. The WOK imagination has been a driving force in the history of scientific theories and often times been proved wrong. For example, as recent as the 19th century, a large following in the scientific community believed that that the earth was constantly expanding and that would explain the movement of continental plates. However, this movement lost support when in 1979 the movement of tectonic plates gained compelling evidence. Though this “Expanding Earth Theory” has lost most of its credibility, according to the standards of its time it was revolutionary as it took historical evidence of shifting continents and used imagination to conjure up a logical explanation to the affair. It would be unfair to judge the “Expanding Earth Theory” on the same standards as modern natural sciences because new evidence has surfaced which suggests otherwise. The natural sciences are based on continual discovery and growth and theories such as the aforementioned allow for the discovery of new evidence.

On the other hand, it is argued that no matter the time period, all events should be judged on the same standard because that provides a consistent method in which history is analyzed in. If all history is judged based on the same standards, then there is less room for controversy about right versus wrong. For example, when analyzing the Holocaust, if it is viewed as morally wrong in modern standards, then that is the only way that it should be discussed because it provides a consistent outlook. Also, by judging the past on modern standards it may provide helpful insight to historians as they are trying to make connections to modern and past political figures. It can be taken into consideration when looking at history that some advances were not yet able to be utilized, however the quality of the work and the way in which it is conducted needs to be judged on the same standard or else there is room for mistakes to be dismissed, hurting the further progression of society.

While this counterargument brings up the point that the quality of the work can be universally judged, the effect of the historical instances themselves need to be judged based on what they were able to do in accordance with their time periods or else a lack of perspective arises and the analyzation becomes narrow and one-dimensional. As seen through the AOK’s the arts, ethics, and natural sciences in addition to the WOK’s language, emotion, reason, and imagination, history has progressed and will continue to progress. History has allowed for different diplomatic tactics to be formed, ethics has established acceptable ways of communication, and natural sciences have provided evidence to explain global phenomenons, all of which were not present prior to their discoveries. History must be judged on the standards of its own times or else it becomes subjective and not applicable to the modern analysis.

Work Cited

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