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THE PROBLEM OF MORAL STATEMENTS IN HISTORICAL WRITING

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of  
Montclair State University in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education

by

ALEXANDRA KATHERINE PERRY

Montclair State University

Upper Montclair, NJ

2012

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Jaime Grinberg

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MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

We hereby approve the Dissertation

THE PROBLEM OF MORAL STATEMENTS IN HISTORICAL WRITING

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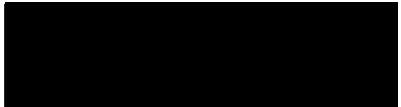
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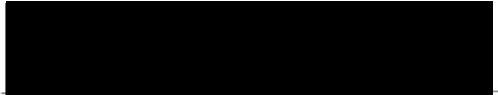
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## ABSTRACT

### THE PROBLEM OF MORAL STATEMENTS IN HISTORICAL WRITING

by Alexandra Katherine Perry

Bernard Williams (1985) begins his skeptical look at the history of ethical theory with a reminder of where it began, with Socrates' question, "how should one live?" (pg. 1). This question is relevant to historians, who ask a similar question, "how did people live?" in their own work. To wonder "how one should live" or to make statements about the ways in which people have lived is to rely on the work of historians. The question of what historians can know about the past, however, is a very philosophical question, and it is dependent on our views about such things as what problem, if any, temporal distance poses to our ability to arriving at such knowledge.

In discussing whether temporal distance can be overcome in order to understand the actions and events of the past from the perspective of those who lived in it, philosophers have offered a wide range of arguments and have come to various conclusions. Skeptics, such as Williams (1985), have claimed that distance establishes a relativism, which, in a way, prevents us from looking to the distant past and asking whether that is "how one should live", or whether a particular historical practice constituted "living well." In contrast, R.G. Collingwood takes a much less skeptical stance, arguing that he believes it is not only possible, but also necessary, to hold the beliefs of distant agents in order to do genuine history. Collingwood goes so far as to claim that in order to avoid "scissors and paste" history, or history that makes use of

inductive generalization, historians must re-enact thoughts in their own minds that are identical to the historical agent or agents that they are studying.

Questions about whether it is possible for historians to really know the past and the ways in which people lived, or whether it is possible for two agents under very different contexts to hold identical beliefs, leaves historians in a very precarious place when deciding how to present material to students of history through textbooks or in classroom debates. It seems intuitive to make these statements because, after all, if we aim to address the question of “how one should live” then the work of historians may just be our greatest source of what Mill (1869, pg. 52) called “experiments in living” or narratives about different ways that humans have lived. It’s likely, however, that most people do not take up either the skeptical end of the spectrum held by Williams or the re-enactivist end of it held by Collingwood.

An epistemological pluralism, which supposes that there are "many 'knowledges' (systems of knowledge or ways of knowing)" (Eldridge, 2007, p. 1) might be the most useful for these historians because it emphasizes that for different types of ethical statements and different uses of history, different "systems of knowledge or ways of knowing" and beliefs about the possibility of belief might be valid and useful. Historians ought to acknowledge that the types of ethical claims they are making are varied and may place different levels of burden on the historian to address the sort of skepticism raised by Williams. This acknowledgement would allow for the examination of various types and levels of ethical claims without a strict commitment to either skepticism or re-enactment.

In this dissertation, I explore this problem and also survey history textbooks that were published over the past seven decades to determine what types of moral statements are being made in them. I find that there are six types of claims that are commonly being made, and that they fit rather easily in to two categories. I explain these categories and types of claims, and also discuss the relevance of views toward knowledge to them. Because there is not much, if any, distinction made in the texts between the various types of claims that are made, I also suggest ways that historians might highlight these differences, paying attention, when appropriate, to Williams-style skepticism, in their writing and in their classrooms.

## **Acknowledgement**

I am deeply grateful to a number of people for their support on this dissertation. I would like to thank my dissertation advisor, Jaime Grinberg, for his guidance, encouragement, and feedback on my work.

I am also indebted to my committee members, Chris Herrera and Maughn Gregory, who have dedicated their time to offering thoughtful comments on my drafts and about my ideas. Chris first introduced me to the work of Collingwood and Williams and sparked my interest in the philosophy of history. He was always willing to go on library runs when I needed inspiration, and to give pep talks when I needed a morale boost, all the while working tirelessly with me to improve my writing. Maughn taught me a great deal about the dissertation process and was always able to suggest just the sources that I needed for a particular section or chapter.

My colleagues at Bergen Community College offered support throughout the dissertation process and were an excellent sounding board for ideas. Their support helped me overcome many setbacks and frustrations.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the librarians at Harvard University's Gutman Library who helped me locate sources, offered advice on textbook research, and provided me with access to their archives.

Finally and most importantly, this dissertation would not have been possible without the support of my friends and family.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my boys, to whom all credit really belongs.

Jack, you are the world's best work buddy. I'm so proud of all that you do and am inspired by how hard you will work to realize your dreams. You are a wonderful kid, and there's no question in my mind that one day I'll get to watch you orbit the earth in a shuttle or put a rocket in to space. For all of the times that you reminded me, "you can do this, Mom!" this dissertation is for you.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: SOME CASES IN ETHICS & HISTORY**

### **Introduction**

In 2011 Japan was struck by a tsunami that left close to 26,000 people dead or missing. The epicenter of the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami was close to Sendai, a port city and the capital of Miyagi Prefecture. News of the tsunami quickly spread and within days the world's attention was focused on Japan. The tsunami raised questions about the stability of the weakened Asian stock markets, Japan's ability to bounce back from such catastrophe, and the danger of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. It also raised questions about history, morality, and teaching.

Personal blogs and popular social networking outlets were flooded with comments such as, "Dear Japan, it's not nice to be snuck up on by something you can't do anything about, is it? Sincerely, Pearl Harbor" and "If you want to feel better about this earthquake in Japan, google 'Pearl Harbor death toll' or 'if this Earthquake is Japan's Karmic punishment for Pearl Harbor, I dread to see what ours will be for Hiroshima and Nagasaki'" (Asakawa, 2011, pg. 1). Quickly, media coverage on the Japanese disaster broadened to include debates about free speech.

Meanwhile, educators and policy makers have been engaged in debates over the content of textbooks used to teach U.S. history. In Texas, professionals raised questions over whether textbooks should have a socially-conservative bias, and later were criticized for "sugar-coating" the version of Islam that students were presented with (McKinley, 2010 and Huus 2010). A similar debate occurred when Arizona lawmakers proposed that

schools lose funding if they continued to include ethnic studies in their history curriculum (Lewin, 2010).<sup>1</sup>

At first glance, these situations seem unrelated: What have comments about the Tōhoku tsunami to do with debates over U.S. history curriculum? As I hope to show, very much indeed. I argue that textbooks are the primary source of knowledge about history and historical events. The emphasis that is given to various historical events and actions, the way that morality and moral statements function in history, and the way that these elements of history change and are reflected over time construct the way that we make sense of history and the way that we understand the world.

This dissertation focuses on one particular element of this issue: the use of moral statements in historical writing. That is, how authors reflect the trends of their own times as well as their own views about the moral objectionability or justification of historical events and actions in their writing, and also how historical writing deals with material that is up for debate with respect to morality. This dissertation sets this problem against the backdrop of contemporary debates over textbooks and the content of U.S. History courses to explore the meanings that moral statements carry for the use of historical writing and history texts in education. I argue that in light of an understanding of the way that moral statements are used in historical writing and of the way morality is reflected in historical writing changes over time, a pedagogical approach that assigns a central role to pluralism is necessary for critical history education.

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<sup>1</sup> This proposal was particularly controversial because Arizona school districts have a large percentage of Mexican-American students, and many took the proposal as a direct attempt to marginalize these students or to keep them from learning about Mexican culture and history.

History textbooks are used almost universally in history courses as a reliable source of knowledge about historical events and time periods. The content of textbooks and historical writing accounts for much of the information that we know about the past. Yet, the material included in historical writing and the way that this material is covered changes over time and differs across sources. Lorenz (1996) notes, “Although historians usually claim to describe the past ‘as it really was,’ the variety of their descriptions and their changes over time is one of the most outstanding features of historiography” (p. 234). This accounts for the debates over textbooks and history curriculum currently being covered in the media, which are fueled on by disagreements over how best to present material and which content should be included or excluded.

These debates over history also have implications that reach far past the classroom. Indeed, it is common to hear talk of history repeating itself, historical cycles, and learning from the past in everyday conversations. Howard Zinn (2003) notes:

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places--and there are so many--where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory. (2004, p. 2)

In this way, the comments relating the Tōhoku tsunami to the attacks on Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki are very much connected to the discussion over history textbooks, what they ought to include, and how events should be presented.

It is hard to imagine those who made comments suggesting that the tsunami was “payback” for the attack on Pearl Harbor assisting in the relief effort in Japan. Zinn might argue that their “capacity to do something” has been “destroyed” by their choice to “see only the worst.” The problem runs much deeper than this, however. Individuals draw upon the knowledge that they have about history in order to make statements about historical events. Would the comments made in the wake of the tsunami have been different if the individuals who made them had learned about history from sources that had, for example, contrasted the death toll of both Pearl Harbor and the atomic bombs? It is impossible to answer such questions, although it is likely that the historical knowledge drawn upon in the post-Tsunami comments is a reflection of the way that historical events were presented in history courses using history textbooks. The relationship between morality and historical writing has implications far beyond how students understand the material while they are enrolled in history courses. Indeed, these implications extend to the way we make sense of current events and how compelled we might feel to act.

In this dissertation I explore the relationship between morality and historical writing. My goal is to understand the kinds of moral statements that are used in history textbooks and to understand the way that moral statements operate in historical writing. I approach this goal by looking at the moral statements that are included in sections of U.S. History textbooks that cover the Japanese-American internment and the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I look at the differences between the coverage of these two events and also look at the way that the coverage of both events in historical

writing has changed over time by analyzing the use of moral statements in history textbooks across four different eras.

Three elements of this problem are critical to address at the outset: The first: What is the relationship between morality and historical writing? In addressing this question I will discuss the possibility of making moral judgments about the past, the kinds of ethical issues faced by historians in writing history, and the kind of epistemological issues that arise in historiography. Second, I aim to explore the kinds of moral statements that are made in historical writing. I use the term “statements” here broadly to indicate both moral judgments and those phrases included in historical writing that center on morality without necessarily passing judgment. Finally, I will consider what implications understanding the function of moral statements in historical writing might bring to bear on history pedagogy.

### **Overview of Dissertation Methods**

History textbooks provide a wealth of information about the content of history courses. The role of textbooks in history classrooms is likely more central than the role of any other source of historical knowledge. Research on textbooks thus proves to be important in understanding the function and implications of historical knowledge. Many methodological approaches to analyzing writing are used for the media, literature, and so on. However, these approaches don’t always stretch to fit textbooks, which are written and used in different ways than other kinds of text material. So what methods ought to be used to study textbooks?

Nicholls (2003, 2006) has outlined research methods that are well-suited to studying history textbooks. Nicholls writes:

Textbook research is underpinned by a series of closely connected philosophical assumptions. First, on the level of epistemology, there is the question of knowledge. Competing definitions over what constitutes, for example, 'history' or 'geography', are necessarily grounded in epistemological claims over what constitutes knowledge and about what it is possible to know.... what is considered to constitute historical knowledge is also a question of power or 'the politics of knowledge' (Nicholls, 2006, p. 24).

Nicholls goes on to explain how these philosophical assumptions shape the methods that ought to be used in researching textbooks. Ultimately he concludes that a method that critically engages the researcher in the analysis of texts by considering multiple perspectives is necessary. Nicholls refines the UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision (1974) in his proposed methods and outlines the process of defining a textbook sample, qualitative methods of textbook research that include hermeneutic analysis, linguistic analysis, cross-cultural analysis, discourse analysis, and contingency analysis. He also describes the methods of textbook research used in this dissertation: disciplinary or historiographical analysis, critical analysis, and structural analysis.

In chapter three I give a detailed account of my methods for researching textbooks in this dissertation. I follow Nicholls's proposed methods for textbook research in order to analyze the role of moral statements in historical writing. In the following section I give an overview of the organization of this dissertation.

## **Organization of Dissertation**

In the remaining sections of chapter one I offer a brief background to the historical events that I use in my study of historical writing. First, I discuss the Manhattan Project and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Then I discuss the Japanese-American internment. These events were selected because they show both the domestic and foreign elements of the relationship between the U.S. and Japan during World War II.

Chapter two introduces the problem of moral statements in historical writing. I explore the kinds of research questions that are taken up in the philosophy of history and describe the two branches of philosophy that are most relevant to history: epistemology and ethics and explain the most influential theories of each.

In chapter three I describe my research methods and provide some context for my study. I introduce two broad categories of moral statements, provide details about the textbooks I selected for my study, and include a rationale for comparing data across time periods. I also describe the methods involved in textbook research.

Chapter four introduces the theory of moral judgments that arose from my analysis of the moral statements in U.S. history texts. I offer in-depth accounts of the two general categories of moral statements, backward and forward-looking, and then describe the sub-categories that each contains by using examples from history texts.

Finally, chapter five specifically takes up the implications that a theory of moral statements in historical writing brings to bear on education. I discuss pluralism, which I argue ought to be a central feature of history education, and propose that negotiation

between competing perspectives is advantageous to education because it resembles professional historiography. In each of these chapters I will use the two historical events- the atomic bombs used over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Japanese-American internment- in order to illustrate points that I make about morality and history. In the following section I introduce each of these events.

## **Ethics & History: U.S. and Japanese Military Interaction During World War II**

### **Einstein's one mistake: the bombings of Japanese cities**

When Albert Einstein, then a fellow at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, heard the news of the bombing of Hiroshima, the first use of nuclear weapons in history, he lowered his head in to his hands and declared, "Woe is me. I could burn my fingers that I wrote that first letter!" (Herweck, 2009, pg. 26). Six years earlier, Einstein had written to President F.D. Roosevelt advising him that a group of scientists led by Leo Szilard, had been conducting research on uranium and that this research had the potential to yield results that might be useful to the administration. Einstein wrote:

[I]t may become possible to set up a nuclear chain reaction in a large mass of uranium, by which vast amounts of power and large quantities of new radium like elements would be generated. Now it appears almost certain that this could be achieved in the immediate future. This new phenomenon would also lead to the construction of bombs, and it is conceivable -- though much less certain -- that extremely powerful bombs of a new type may thus be constructed. A single bomb of this type, carried by boat and exploded in a port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory. However, such bombs might very well prove to be too heavy for transportation by air...In view of this situation you may think it desirable to have some permanent contact maintained between the Administration and the group of physicists working on chain reactions in America.

Einstein, who considered himself a pacifist, had a clear justification for warning President Roosevelt: if the Germans were developing nuclear technology then the United States had better be able to beat them (Seelig, 1995). Einstein maintained that he was a pacifist and remained wary of the development of nuclear technology, repeatedly claiming that his support of the Manhattan Project was only insofar as the project was a necessary evil in light of German threats. Later, he would condemn the use of the atomic bombs and claimed that had he “known that the Germans would not succeed in developing an atomic bomb” he “would have done nothing” (Clark, 2001, pg. 752). In 1954, less than a year before his death, Einstein said to fellow scientist Linus Pauling: “I made one great mistake in my life... when I signed the letter to President Roosevelt recommending that atom bombs be made; but there was some justification - the danger that the Germans would make them” (Clark, pg. 752).

The question of whether the development of the atomic bombs was justified given enemy threats has been debated widely, as has the morality of using the bombs. The bombings of Japan began on April 18th 1942, 690 miles off the coast of Japan when the U.S.S. Hornet launched sixteen military planes to raid Tokyo. This raid, now known as the Doolittle Raid, was the first large-scale strike against the Japanese Home Islands during World War II. Little damage was done to Tokyo during this raid, but the Doolittle Raid did much to boost morale among American soldiers and the American public. In February and March 1945, however, U.S. attacks on Tokyo did much more damage, with multiple bombings causing over 100,000 deaths in Japan, and destroying more than half

of the city. Still, these attacks are both considered minor compared to the damage done by the atomic bombs later in the war.

While the Doolittle Raid is considered to be the first significant strike against Japan, the U.S. had been planning more attacks for some time. In June 1941, President Roosevelt had signed Executive Order 8807, creating the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD). The OSRD focused much of its efforts on methods of isotope separation, in order to separate various forms of uranium. Many scientists from Ivy League universities, such as Robert Oppenheimer, conducted work on this project with the majority coming from Columbia University. The Manhattan Project was worked on in extreme secrecy. In July 1945, the group tested the first atomic bomb in Alamogordo, New Mexico.

In August 1945, the U.S. dropped Atomic bombs, developed under The Manhattan Project, and destroyed two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The first bomb, nicknamed “Little Boy,” was dropped over Hiroshima from Enola Gay, a B-29 bomber, on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945. On August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the second bomb, “Fat Man,” was dropped from Bockscar, another B-29 bomber, over the Japanese city Nagasaki.

These bombings caused over 200,000 casualties combined in Japan, which was close to surrender by this point. Sixty-nine percent of Hiroshima was destroyed, and forty-four percent of Nagasaki. The ethical justification of the bombing of Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki has been widely debated by scholars, some of whom argue that the bombings were unnecessary to cause surrender, and simply a way to show the world

the strengths of U.S. military strategy and development. Still, other scholars argue that the success of these attacks prevented further attacks and countless casualties.

While the military waged war against Japan in the Pacific, civilians were growing increasingly uneasy about Japanese and Japanese-Americans populations living in and around the west coast. Eventually President Roosevelt would sign Executive Order 9066, which would allow the secretary of war to designate geographic regions as “military areas” and would allow for the quarantine and relocation of “any and all persons” from these areas. The result was that individuals of Japanese ancestry were removed in great numbers from the west coast and relocated to remote areas of Arkansas, Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona, Utah, California, and Idaho designated by the military as “internment camps” (Exec. Order No. 9066, 3 C.F.R. 1942).

### **Resident Aliens: The Relocation of Japanese-American Citizens**

Quarantine was something of a theme during F.D. Roosevelt’s presidency. In October 1937, Roosevelt gave what is now known as his “quarantine speech” to crowds in Chicago. The nation was growing anxious of the tension in Europe and Asia, and Roosevelt aimed to insure that such tension would not affect the United States. Roosevelt commented on this tension by drawing an analogy to a public health crisis, and claimed that the United States would continue to quarantine itself off from this aggression. The following is a snippet from his speech:

It seems to be unfortunately true that the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. And mark this well: When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease. War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared. It can engulf states and peoples

remote from the original scene of hostilities. We are determined to keep out of war, yet we cannot insure ourselves against the disastrous effects of war and the dangers of involvement. We are adopting such measures as will minimize our risk of involvement, but we cannot have complete protection in a world of disorder in which confidence and security have broken down. (Roosevelt, 1937)

This tension eventually reached the United States, which later became involved in World War II. One of the greatest sources of conflict for the United States was Japan. In December 1942, Japan launched an attack on a U.S. naval base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, marking the official start of U.S. participation in the war. U.S. unease about Japan continued to grow as the level of conflict rose. This was especially true on the west coast, where the Japanese-American population was much greater than in the east. Many citizens became wary that Issei (Japanese immigrants), Nisei (the children of Japanese immigrants) and Sansei (second generation Japanese-Americans) living on or near the west coast might be serving as spies for Japan. Racial tension was at an all-time high.

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1942, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. The order essentially allowed for the internment of Japanese-American residents, including U.S. citizens, living on the West Coast (Hutchinson, 2002). The order allowed for the designation of “exclusion zones” from which government officials could exclude any and all persons, with the exception of those living in internment camps. Japanese-Americans were transported to assembly centers, relocation facilities, and, in cases where criminal behavior was suspected, official internment camps. Overall, 110,000 Japanese-Americans were detained in eight different camps. These citizens were given the opportunity to voluntarily relocate outside of the exclusion area, but were not offered any

help in doing so. Those remaining within the exclusion area were subject to a nightly curfew before being relocated.

When the relocation camps were finally constructed, Japanese families were often moved into them very quickly, without being told where they would be moving. They were not able to bring many possessions with them, so many left behind jobs and property when they were forced to move. They arrived at the facilities often unprepared for the weather conditions of the location, and were forced to share barracks with one another, and often shared bathroom facilities as well. They were offered little in the way of education for the children they brought with them, and had few opportunities for meaningful work inside the camp. In some instances, detainees were even shot for leaving the prison gates (Daniels, 1986). Some of the Japanese in the camps were asked to denounce Japan and swear allegiance to the United States, causing them to dishonor their own communities and heritage.

In December 1945, the internment camps were officially closed and detainees were offered twenty-five dollars in order to reestablish their lives outside of the camps. They were allowed to return home, though many had, by this time, lost their homes and their livelihoods. The U.S. public was unaware of the relocation for most of the war, and the government justified its actions by citing the need to quarantine potential dangers.

Eventually, the government recommended that apologies be made to individuals who were interned as well as their descendants, claiming that the “internment of the individuals of Japanese ancestry was caused by racial prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership” (S. 1009, 1987, pg. 4).

## **Limitations**

There are some limitations to this study that ought to be recognized in consideration of any future research on the topic. The number of textbooks used in this analysis is small and therefore might not account for all of the material that is covered within the field. It is also important to keep the use of historical writing in perspective. Textbooks are one of many tools that historians and history teachers might use. The value of identifying and categorizing the different types of moral claims may outweigh these limitations in many cases. Future research on the way that history texts are utilized in the classroom and how teachers engage students over moral statements found in the text might be useful to further address these limitations.

Nicholls (2005) also pointed out that textbooks are relied upon as heavily to teach history in many other countries as they are in the U.S. As such, an international comparison of the inclusion and function of moral statements in historical writing might shed further light on the issues that I present in this dissertation. In particular, historiographical and linguistic research on Japanese textbooks would, I'm sure, provide interesting insight in to another element of the historical coverage of both the atomic bombs and the Japanese-American internment.

The presence and variance of moral statements within the texts suggests that teachers ought to and often do play a significant role in the presentation of ethical issues in history. The results of this study offer insight into what treatment moral statements are given in history texts. The development of the taxonomy, in particular, can serve to help the authors of history text and history educators further consider how they present ethical issues in history.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE PROBLEM OF MORAL STATEMENTS IN HISTORY

### Introduction

In his essay, “On Human Dignity,” Kenzaburo Oé tells the story of a Japanese runner born in Hiroshima on the day that the Atomic bomb was dropped. The man was selected as the last man to carry the Olympic flame in the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. He describes the runner, stating that if he “had keloid scars or some other sign of radiation injury, that is if he had been an unmistakable A-bomb casualty, then I would not have objected to the selection.” Instead, Oé continues, “the middle distance runner actually chosen had a perfectly healthy body; we were impressed by his stamina as he ran at full speed in the huge stadium, with the smile of one free of all anxiety” (Oé, 1996, p.108).

Though Oé was troubled by the selection, he explains that he was much more troubled by the reactions of an American journalist who “might be expected to understand Japan and the Japanese people” (Oé, 1996, p.108). Oé describes the journalist’s reaction as follows:

[T]he American journalist was displeased because the young man, born in Hiroshima on the atomic bombing day, reminded Americans of the atomic bomb. He preferred to erase all traces of Hiroshima from the American memory. Worse still, this preference occurs not only to the American mind. Do not all leaders who at present possess nuclear weapons also wish to erase Hiroshima from their memories? (Oé, 1996, pp.108-109).

This anecdote is indicative of the kinds of debates that arise at the intersection of epistemology and ethics. Can and should knowledge of particular historical events be erased? Should historical events like the use of the atomic bombs remain in public memory in the service of moral progress? What are we to make of ethics in history?

In this chapter, I introduce the problem of making moral statements in historical writing. First I give an overview of how epistemology and ethics have traditionally been addressed in the philosophy of history. Next, I explain how both epistemology and ethics are relevant to the problem of making moral statements in history. Finally, I show that this problem is also significant to education, specifically to the writing of history and the use of texts in the history classroom.

### **The Philosophy of History**

Questions about the nature of history and the limits of historical knowledge are the focus of scholarship among philosophers of history (Day, 2008). This sub-discipline is often shared by philosophers and historians, and addresses questions about what it might mean to conduct good historical inquiry, and what questions ought to come under its purview. Much of the focus of the philosophy of history is on epistemology, or the nature and limits of knowledge. An example of how this issue arises in the work of historians would be the setting of a research agenda in history. Historians need to decide not only what they want to know, but also which sorts of research questions are appropriate given the purposes of their research program. The epistemological position that historians take may determine, in part, what knowledge they are looking for, which part of history they will direct their inquiry toward, and what their research program will entail (Nicholls, 2005). In addition, there are epistemological questions relevant to historical research agendas such as, which questions are most likely to add to the body of historical knowledge given the time period or culture being studied? What kinds of questions are capable of being inquired into? In what body of literature, set of

documents, or artifacts are historians likely to find evidence for or against their hypotheses? And how can historians best determine which, among conflicting perspectives on historical events, are most reasonable (Novick, 1998)? These questions sometimes give philosophers of history cause to ask a broader and more troubling question: whether historical knowledge exists at all?

Methodological questions about historical inquiry also often concern knowledge claims. Historians make statements about which questions and methods are most likely to yield historical knowledge, what might count as evidence in support of a claim, how hypotheses are to be tested, what constitutes a good historical explanation, and so on. They also consider the role of theory in constructing knowledge about the past. In addition, historians develop methods that maintain a level of epistemological objectivity by, for example, guarding against bias, and make claims about the role of the community of professional historians in shoring up the objectivity of each other's work (Reizler, 1948).

In addition, the implications of, and biases involved in historical knowledge pose interesting challenges to historians. As in science, they consider the social, political, and ethical implications of historical knowledge, and whether everyone has the right to the knowledge produced by historians. For example, a historian might be presented with a conflict if her research shows that seemingly unethical actions actually had consequences that were justifiably positive (Morison, 1951).

Many scholars, such as Tucker (2001) view philosophy of history as similar to the philosophy of science because of the epistemological and ethical questions they each pose. Philosophy of science and philosophy of history share common epistemological questions about the nature, role, and reliability of evidence; the way in which scientific or historical knowledge can shape notions of truth; what counts as historical or scientific knowledge; the explanatory power of various theories; and whether it is possible to have scientific or historical truth (Nagel, 1961). Both disciplines have gone through similar progressions with regard to schools of thought, as well. Both were dominated, at least for a time, by positivist theories, and, recently, both have been given a great deal of attention by postmodern theorists (Day 2008). In addition, both science and history are often cited in everyday discussions as informing moral statements.

While moral statements have been the focus of many discussions within philosophy of science, perhaps in part because scientific research often requires the approval of ethics review boards, there has been much less discussion about the nature of moral statements made in the course of historical inquiry (Lemon, 2003). Instead, the philosophy of history has traditionally set most of its attention toward the areas of epistemology and metaphysics. In the following sections, I outline epistemology as it is relevant to the philosophy of history and also begin to make a case for the uniqueness of moral statements in history, arguing that more attention ought to be given to them, particularly to the way that they are presented in textbooks.

## Epistemology

In considering the role of knowledge in debates over history, Lifshultz and Bird (1998) ask, “How do we know, or come to know, what we know?” (p. xxxi). They emphasize that historical knowledge is extremely complicated and write:

[E]ssentially, this question of epistemology pertains not only to one’s self, but also to the societies we inhabit. From the earliest days of human consciousness, mythical accounts of the past have guided entire peoples and nations...the narratives and myths we love with may often have great merit. They bind generations to one another and can establish a rich and textured context through which most people navigate difficult lives in harsh terrain. For many the tales of their ancestors provide security and even certainty in a world where there are few safe havens. Yet, the legends and stories of our past have at moments also blinded us to ourselves and have on more than one occasion become accessories to acts of willful and powerful destruction (Lifshultz and Bird, 1998, p. xxxi).

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with knowledge and related questions about truth, belief, and the warrant for knowledge and belief. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online cites the following as being the questions that concern epistemology: “What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge? What are its sources? What is its structure, and what are its limits? How are we to understand the concept of justification? What makes justified beliefs justified?” (Streup, 2010). Epistemology is often situated within particular disciplinary contexts or focused on particular subject matters. As Streup notes, “epistemology is about issues having to do with the creation and dissemination of knowledge in particularly areas of inquiry” (2010). What counts as justification for belief or warranted knowledge differs across subject matters such as science, social science, and religion.

The philosophy of history focuses much of its attention on epistemic questions about the nature and limits of historical knowledge. In history, epistemological inquiry addresses themes and questions that are specific to the discipline (Tucker, 2009). The fundamental epistemological questions include:

- (1) What does history consist of- individual actions, social structures, periods and regions, civilizations, large causal processes, divine intervention? (2) Does history as a whole have meaning, structure, or direction beyond the individual events and actions that make it up? (3) What is involved in our knowing, representing, and explaining history? (4) To what extent is human history constitutive of the human present? (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Little, 2011)

The most fundamental questions about historical knowledge center on its nature and possibility, and traditionally, there have been six distinguishable positions within the philosophy of history that aim to address them. As the table below outlines, there are a variety of philosophical positions that address the nature of knowledge, ranging from idealism, the belief that all knowledge is derived from mental processes (Lennon, 2011); to realism, the belief that knowledge derives from the mind's encounter with reality independent of it (Pendlebury, 2011). Realist theories include empiricism, the theory that knowledge is gained through (sensory) experience; and rationalism, the theory that knowledge is gained through rational thought (Feyerabend, 1985).

*Table 1: Epistemological Theories and Views about the Possibility of Knowledge*

Theory	View of Knowledge
Realism	The belief that reality exists independently of the mind, which can take various forms including empiricism and rationalism.
Empiricism	Knowledge derives from the senses and sensory experience
Rationalism	Knowledge derives from reason, which provides a source of justification for belief.
Idealism	The belief that all knowledge and experience are mind-dependent (some idealists believe that reality is also mind-dependent while others believe that reality can exist independent from the mind).
Constructivism	Knowledge is constructed by experts in a given field (e.g. scientists, historians, or social scientists) and does not exist independently of this construction.
Historicism	A hermeneutical view of knowledge, which maintains that history is critical to understanding knowledge, i.e., that knowledge cannot be separated from particular historical paradigms or contexts.

More recently, theorists have also addressed constructivism, the belief that all knowledge about a subject is constructed by experts in that subject and that it cannot be separated from these experts and theories (Slezak, 2010); and historicism, the theory that knowledge ideas cannot be separated from their history, and that the questions raised within a particular historical context must be addressed from within that context as well (Iggers, 1995). Constructivism and Historicism are more often schools of thought within the continental tradition, while the other positions mentioned are more traditionally associated with the analytic school of thought.

There is also much gradation in philosophical positions over the nature and justification of historical knowledge, which is slightly different than questions about the possibility or nature of historical knowledge. Peter Novick (1998) describes the

discipline of history as having gone through large-scale ideological, theoretical, and methodological shifts over the last century. Novick claims that there was a long period of time in which there was consensus within the discipline of history as to the methodological practices and ethical obligations of professional historians. He describes the early methodological goal of professional historians as being to, “discover and record the objective truth about the past. To cooperatively and cumulatively move ever closer to the perhaps ultimately unattainable but eminently approachable goal of a true and complete picture of the human past” (Novick, 1998, p. 29). Recently, he claims, there is less consensus over the idea that historians’ accounts can be justified by a direct correspondence to historical truth, and the field has divided among various new positions about historical warrant. Such positions include positivism and consensus-reliant theories, and are summarized in the table on the following page.

	View of Historical Truth	Historical Methodology	Epistemology of Ethical and Political Statements
Positivism	Historical Knowledge is acquired through empirical means.	Objective, empirical data.	History is about fact, not value, so historical knowledge should not- in fact, cannot- include ethical or political statements.
Consensus-Reliant Theories	Objectivity is the measure, but historical knowledge rests on warranted conjectures, not absolute truth. Methodologies are reconstructed in light of newly discovered biases.	Consensus-reliant historians look for trends, cycles, and clear shifts, and pay attention to the dependence of historical knowledge on theoretical perspectives.	Historical events, actions, and practices are open for ethical and political evaluation, but only to the extent that those evaluations are reasonable, in light of the historical evidence.
Post-Structuralist	Various epistemological stances or methods are possible and ought to be used as a means toward producing historical knowledge.	Plural methods may be necessary. Because all knowledge is assumed to be constructed from various perspectives and attempts are made to articulate, rather than reconcile these.	It is assumed that each work of history is constructed using ethical and political perspectives; the diversity of which is cultivated. Historical actions and practices can be evaluated ethically and politically using multiple epistemological stances.

Table 2: Views of the Justification of Historical Knowledge

Philosophical positions toward the nature and justification of historical knowledge include positivism, consensus-reliant views, and post-structuralist views. Positivism is the view that truth in the social sciences can be as objective as truth in the natural sciences (Connelly, 2008). It supposes that knowledge is based on what is verifiable through empirical means, and not metaphysical, supernatural (e.g. teleological) explanation and that facts about the past ought to be known the way scientific facts are known. The past might serve as informative to present ethical and political issues, but historical statements cannot involve ethical or political evaluations of facts about the past in and of themselves. In discussing methodology, positivism asserts that testimonies ought to conform to one another, and be congruent with documentary and physical evidence, and that the historian is justified in discrediting those testimonies that rely on speculation or fanaticism. The historian is to preserve facts, not make value judgments about them, because there is a gap between facts and values. Historians and scientists work in the realm of facts. Ethical and political evaluation only enters in to historical practice in reflection over the historian's own methodology, e.g. making judgments over which testimonies ought to be included in a narrative, and which research questions should be asked. Historians might inform the present, but it is not the work of historians to evaluate the past (Turchin, 2003).

In contrast, consensus-reliant views maintain that objectivity ought to be the measure in historical work, but argue that all knowledge is at least somewhat theory-laden. These views are positivistic to a degree, but hold that in every case of inquiry,

truth reduces to warranted conjectures, not absolute knowledge. Consensus-Reliant views maintain that the historian needs to recognize his or her own epistemological context and biases and ought to acknowledge the role of theory in the construction of knowledge. Much of their focus is on falsification, and they maintain that theories may sometimes be falsified by the introduction of new evidence. Further, they maintain that falsification is more likely than the unqualified verification of existing ideas, and may result in the reevaluation of theories or mindsets. In other words, rather than assert that currently-warranted knowledge is truth, they maintain that it is not yet falsehood. However, because consensus-reliant historians take seriously the dependence of historical knowledge on theoretical perspectives, they see that it is not always possible to choose between two conflicting historical hypotheses by simply testing them against the evidence. When the available evidence equally supports conflicting theory-dependent hypotheses, these historians seek ways to choose among them or reconcile them. Like positivists, they believe that objectivity is a matter of consensus or convergence: of evidence, perspectives, interpretations and theories. They see divergence among these as a problem, i.e. as a call for further inquiry (Paul, 2011).

Because consensus-reliant historians allow for a more dynamic relationship between knower and the would-be-known, some are willing to include overt ethical and political value statements as part of the work of historical inquiry. For some, historical conditions can serve as real options for the present. Some consensus-reliant historians evaluate the events, actions, and practices of the past, ethically and

politically, as a means of considering them as options for the present. They do not view history as simply a series of natural causes and effects in the social world, but as test cases of individual ethical and political judgments, and collective movements, that can inform the present. The past can be evaluated in two key ways:

1. In a more positivistic way, that is, as a means of demarcating points with an aim toward moral progress (Kant, 1784).<sup>2</sup>
2. By determining clear shifts between historical periods and assessing their value and replicability. The past consists of actual options, and their conditions are the key to replicating these, if desired (Habermas, 1962).

Not all views toward the acquisition of knowledge across the sciences and social sciences fall neatly in to these two categories, however. Some theorists (Berlin, 1954) view multiple methods as necessary for the acquisition of knowledge about history. These views typically maintain that in the case that a method (e.g. the scientific-inductive method) is agreed upon, dissensus is inevitable, and rational debate can mediate this with regard to considerations that are relevant to the context. Also compatible is the view that syncretism and skepticism ought to be avoided. With respect to moral or political statements, allowing for multiple methods isn't clearly compatible with any specific view toward value. Compatible with this kind of epistemic pluralism, however, is the view that axiological disagreement is valuable and "ineliminable" and that evaluative dissensus can be useful because it allows for

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<sup>2</sup> For more discussion of this point, see the teleological view in chapter four.

accommodation when the focus is on multiple, rather than a singular value or evaluation. Historians can evaluate for the sake of informing the present, but these things can also be evaluated on their own right.

## **Ethics**

Ethics is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of good, bad, right, wrong, and so on. Ethicists might be interested in ethical theory, the branch of ethics that addresses questions about the criteria for moral action; or metaethics, the branch of ethics that explores the nature of moral facts and moral language. Alternatively, scholars in ethics might work in applied ethics, focusing their inquiry on what is morally correct in particular situations (Sayre-McCord, 2007). Though ethical theory and metaethics might certainly be addressed in historical research, ethics in history is most closely related to applied or practical ethics because it is focused on particular problems and frames the use of ethical theories and ideas (Singer, 2011). Discussions of ethics in history often employ the same type of moral statements that are typical of discussions of politics and current events in classes and between scholars where ethics is a secondary concern.

Dray (1989) discusses the problem of moral statements and history and notes that, as is common when philosophers “consider problems relating to practice in other disciplines,” (p. 92) it has been “urged...that before philosophers set about prescribing models of explanation for historical inquiry, they should pay more attention to the way investigations in this field actually proceed” (p. 92). Dray argues that philosophers are likely to do much deeper levels of concept analysis, particularly

when it comes to ethics, than the disciplines that they are studying. He urges “philosophers of history to pay some heed” (p. 92) to this warning. Still, he claims, there is some reason to look at the nature of moral statements in history; it just ought to be done by looking first at the work of historians.

Dray, cautious of generalizing, chooses an article, “The Mexican War: A Study in Causation,” (Graebner, 1980) that he claimed was not an unusual piece of historical writing and looked at the way moral statements were used in it. Dray found that moral statements were not only embedded throughout the article, but that these statements were also rhetorically effective. Dray goes further, saying that in making the case for a causal connection between particular events, Graebner uses terms like “free” and “forced” and gives them a “distinctively moral meaning” (pg. 103). Some other examples that Dray gives are references to “Polk’s diplomacy represented as being ‘aggressive’...” and claims that “Mexico is said to have been under no ‘moral obligation’ to alienate territory in order to ease diplomatic and military pressures, the task of easing them apparently belonging to the United States.” Dray points out that smaller phrases such as referring to the money president Polk offered for the Rio Grande as “proper payment,” or suggestions that negotiations “mattered little,” are effective at persuading the readers. Ultimately, Dray concludes that in this particular article “the function of such value judgments is generally to represent the Americans as enjoying freedom of maneuver and the Mexicans as lacking it- to show that, morally speaking at least, the Americans did not have to do what they did whereas the Mexicans did” (pg. 103).

Moral statements in history seem to fall in to two categories: backward-looking statements, that is, statements about whether particular historical events or actions were right or wrong, and forward-looking statements, statements that aim to use history as a source to inform the present or future. Moral language is utilized in history, moral statements are made or revealed intentionally or unintentionally, and these are all persuasively employed (Novick, 1998). However, there is much variation between statements, and a good deal of time could be spent outlining the particular kinds of statements that are made in history. In chapter four, I will look at history texts in order to make sense of the kinds of statements that are made in history, and will discuss the relevance of these statements to the writing and use of history texts.

### **The Problem of Historical Knowledge to Making Moral Statements in History Skepticism**

In subject areas such as history and science, analytic philosophers have often focused on the relationship between the logical analysis of empirical evidence and philosophical speculation about knowledge and values. Some, such as Williams (1985) remain skeptical that empirical knowledge of history ought to be used in making any kind of claim about value, including moral statements, statements about the quality of life in a particular time period, and so on. In other words, Williams views the gap between fact and value in history as being too wide to bridge.

On the other hand, some scholars claim that empirical knowledge about history does offer a valuable springboard from which it is possible to make moral

statements (Collingwood, 1946). This is the conflict that is at the core of this project.

In the following chapters I will tease out these two positions and those that fall between them, first looking at how moral statements are made in history texts and then discussing the relationship between empirical knowledge and value in making them.

The two skeptical positions that serve as the theoretical backdrop for this work hold different views of the possibility of making moral statements about history. This contrast is best illustrated by describing their positions on the two broad categories of moral statements, those that are forward-looking and therefore aim to use history in order to make sense of the present in moral terms, and those that are backward-looking and aim to make some sort of moral appraisal of the past in its own terms. The work of Bernard Williams and R.G. Collingwood best illustrates this contrast. The following table outlines the differences between their approaches to skepticism, which I will explain further in the following sections.

<b>Two Types of Skepticism</b>		
Type of Statement	Bernard Williams	R.G. Collingwood
Forward-Looking	Williams claims that we need historical knowledge in order to deal with the problems of modern day.	Impossible, because matters of preference would simply get in the way. Unnecessary because it is nobody's business to "advance or frustrate the schemes of history."
Backward-Looking	Relativism of Distance: skeptical of the possibility of determining the truth-value of backward-looking statements.	Possible through the historical method, which ought to be reenactment.

### **Relativism of Distance**

Bernard Williams was a British philosopher whose work centered primarily on moral philosophy and the history of philosophy. Educated at Oxford, Williams took a position as the Knightbridge Chair of Philosophy at Cambridge in 1967 and remained there until the mid-1980's when he moved briefly to Berkeley after which he returned to Britain and took a position in Moral Philosophy at Oxford. Williams was critical of theories of morality such as utilitarianism and deontology and was skeptical that systematic approaches to moral philosophy could ever capture the complexities of moral discourse (Chappell, 2010). Williams held that it was both possible and necessary to make forward-looking moral statements in order to deal with the problems of modern day. He argued, however, that it was impossible to make backward-looking moral statements.

Williams (1985) held that forward-looking statements were necessary because we need historical knowledge in order to deal with the problems of the modern day:

What matters more, and may have something to do with comfort or with optimism, is how far notions of objective truth can be extended to social understanding... it [social knowledge or understanding] need not seek to join the natural sciences in providing an absolute conception of the world, but we need to have some reflective social knowledge, including history, that can command unprejudiced assent if the better hopes for our self-understanding are to be realized. We shall need it if we are to carry out the kind of critique that gives ethical insight into institutions through explanations of how they work and, in particular, of how they generate belief in themselves (pg. 199).

Though Williams claims that this sort of historical knowledge is necessary, he is skeptical that empirical knowledge about history will offer much that is useful in

making moral statements. Williams addressed this problem by proposing a relativism of distance (pg. 162). He argues that we can not use “the language of appraisal-good, bad, right, wrong, and so on” (pg. 161) when talking about societies whose epistemic conditions vary greatly from ours because they are distanced by time, or, in Williams’ words, because they are “not real options for us; there is no way of living them” (pg. 161). He claims that these options pose a “notional” rather than “real” (pg. 161) confrontation to our ethical positions, and, as such, are not suitable for ethical appraisal. He maintains that the more chronological distance there is between the beliefs of a particular time and our own, the more implausible it is to believe we can make any sort of insightful moral statements about it. The best we can do is be thankful that we do not live at a time when practices we view as unethical are common, and wonder whether our lives would be well-lived under conditions that we view as ideal, or close to ideal.

About discussions of responsibility to the future, Williams follows this same line of reasoning and argues, “We should not try to seal determinate values into future society.” Though, he claims, “we also have reason to take some positive steps. We should try to leave resources for an adequate life and, as means to that and as part of it, we shall try to transmit what we take to be our knowledge” (172-173). Williams takes a skeptical view toward the idea that moral truth could transcend great distances, placing epistemology at the center of his views on ethics and history. In other words, we can say little more about what we perceive as historical ills than that

we are glad to live under social and political conditions where these are only notional confrontations.

Williams uses the example of a traditional Japanese samurai warrior to illustrate this point. Is it clear that we can say that the samurai practices are unethical, and, further, that we have progressed past these? We could, but it is difficult to call this progress, because we do not know that, given we had the ability to transcend historical boundaries; we would not subscribe to the same sorts of values. In addition, it is unclear that the samurai would view current society as a progression from his own practices. He might, on the other hand, think that our practices are evidence of a sort of moral drift. Heyse (2010) describes Williams' position as the belief that moral statements about history, "cannot be vindicated and therefore amount to nothing more than an empty compliment to ourselves" (p. 226).

Is it necessary to take such a skeptical view of our ability to engage in meaningful ethical inquiry about history? If historians aim to sidestep such uncertainty, they must decide how this can best be done. If, on the other hand, such skepticism is impossible to avoid, it must be reconciled with the process of doing history, and the ultimate aims of it, particularly if making moral statements is unavoidable in historical research, as Dray claimed that it was. Heyse (2010) identified some potential criticisms of Williams' relativism of distance:

Williams's opponents may have good reasons for arguing that relativism of distance depends on 1) the 'unwarranted' suggestion that judging the past 'would be insensitively parochial', 2) ignores the possibility that making statements 'can be the upshot of a kind of reflection which encompasses the possibility of learning from conflicting outlooks', and 3) is threatened by

incoherence, since it requires us to ‘combine recognizing the conflict and standing by one’s own outlook with disclaiming any interest or even possibility of making some negative assessment of the other?’ (Heyse, 2010, pp. 231-232).<sup>3</sup>

Whatever we make of such skepticism, its consideration of belief, knowledge, and, ultimately, truth presents a challenge to the utility of historical methods and aims in making moral statements.

### **Historical Idealism**

Collingwood (1965) held a skeptical view that could be understood as directly opposing Williams’ view. Collingwood held that it was impossible to use history in order to make forward-looking moral judgments because matters of preference would simply get in the way. Additionally, he believed that it was unnecessary to make forward-looking statements because it was nobody’s business to “advance or frustrate the schemes of history” (Collingwood, 1965, p.77). Collingwood’s historical method, however, warranted historians in making backward-looking moral statements because, he claimed, the historical process ought to be one where historians reenact the past in their own minds in order to understand the past under the epistemic conditions of the historical subjects who they studied. Collingwood was a 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher who held positions at Oxford University. Though he wrote widely in philosophy, he is, perhaps, best known for his work on the philosophy of history and the philosophy of art. While other philosophers of history (such as Dray, 1989) also agree that it is possible to make moral statements in history, Collingwood’s proposed

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<sup>3</sup> Heyse acknowledges that the quotations here come from John McDowell’s “Critical Notice of *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* by Bernard Williams” which was originally published in *Mind* XCV (1986), p. 384.

historical methodology presents an extreme contrast to the skepticism of Williams. This methodology, often called Collingwood's historical idealism and sometimes claimed to be historicism (D'Oro, 2010), proposes an intimate relationship between empirical fact and value in history.

For Collingwood, it is reenactment that ought to be the methodology of the historian. Collingwood claims that for the historian to complete her task she should reenact the thoughts of the subject she aims to study in her own mind, in order to recover the original meaning. For Collingwood, "all history is the history of thought" (Collingwood, 1994, pg. 214). So, to study military history is not to study the history of battles, the names of those who stood to win them, and the dates on which they won, and it is not, in Collingwood's words, a history of "weary marches in heat or cold, or the thrills and chills of battle or the long agony of wounded men." Rather, it is "a description of plans and counter-plans: of thinking about strategy and thinking about tactics, and in the last resort of what the men in the ranks thought about the battle." (Collingwood, 1970, pg. 110). For Collingwood, reenactment ought to focus on much more than the major events in history, because:

A great many things which deeply concern human beings are not, and never have been, traditionally included in the subject matter of history. People are born, eat and breathe and sleep, and beget children and become ill and recover again, and die; and these things interest them, most of them, at any rate, far more than art and science, politics and industry, and war. Yet none of these things have been traditionally regarded as possessing historical interest. Most of them have given rise to institutions like dining and marrying and the various rituals that surround birth and death, sickness and recovery; and of these rituals and institutions people write histories; but the history of dining is not the history of eating, and the history of death-rituals is not the history of death (Collingwood, 1956, pp.46).

This view of historical knowledge, called “idealism” by most scholars who have studied Collingwood, but called “strong anti-realism” by Collingwood himself, presents a sharp contrast to the skepticism of Williams not in its methodology, but in its view toward the possibility of making moral statements about history.

Interestingly, though Collingwood thought it was possible to make moral statements about history, he did not think that this was the goal of history. To illustrate this point, he offered the example of Huckleberry Finn’s reaction to the story of Moses, and his relief when he found out that Moses was dead, because he “took no stock in dead men.” Collingwood claims that:

Huckleberry Finn may here stand as the babe or suckling out of whose mouth the historian is to learn wisdom. Moses is dead, and there is no need to get in a sweat about him. It is nobody’s business to give him advice, or to advance or frustrate his schemes; nobody is called upon to work for him or against him, to excite himself about choosing to be pro-Moses or anti-Moses, to allow his feelings to be inflamed with partisanship or opposition, or even to commend or regret, applaud or condemn, label as good or bad. (Collingwood, 1965, pg. 77).

While Collingwood might think it is unnecessary to think in moral terms about history, he does claim that empirical facts provide the knowledge necessary to do so. And, as Dray noted, necessary or not, moral statements are being made in history.

### **Relevance to Historical Scholarship and Teaching**

The problem of historical knowledge, what we can really know about the past, and how that knowledge can inform moral statements, is one that confronts historians, curriculum writers, history teachers and educational policy makers. This problem may not be as simple as it seems on the surface, however. There are many ways to think about historical knowledge, and the way in which history is taught can influence the

very way that history is thought about. Historians and history texts commonly include moral statements about the past (Dray, 1989). Perhaps of equal consideration is the fact that these texts are commonly used by history teachers and professors with their students, who are asked to make moral statements about history. Is it enough to simply ask whether an event was “right” or “justified”?

As posed, the question leaves much to interpretation. Would the answer to this question be the same if the poser were to ask whether, given the knowledge and beliefs held at the time, the actors were justified? Would it change if the question were asking if the same action would be justified in the present, given current beliefs and values? Further, is it important to consider the role that knowledge played in the actor’s decision to engage in the specific action?

### **Contemporary Debates**

The notion of bias and disagreement in history, especially given present conflicts over race, ethnicity and revisionist history, have recently brought the problem of moral statements in history to the public’s attention. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is considering revising eleventh grade curriculum to include only those events that occurred after 1877, which would exclude material on the civil war. Similarly, in March 2010, Texas State Board of Education officials voted to approve new curriculum standards that critics argue (Smith, 2010), are too dramatic a revision of existing curriculum, and reflect religious biases.

Since January, 2010, The Texas State Board of Education has been meeting to vote on new curriculum for its secondary school history classes. This vote is the

source of much controversy, particularly because much of the debate is over which historical figures to include in the new curriculum. Critics argue that the historical figures who officials are considering removing from the curriculum, figures such as Thurgood Marshall and Cesar Chavez (Smith, 2010), are, the majority of the time, non-Anglo, or represent events that are politically liberal, such as “discussion of the separation of church and state,” and events that highlight “race and ethnicity.”

Further, critics argue, the proposed Texas curriculum asserts that “the Founders envisioned America as a divinely inspired Christian nation” (Tanenhaus, 2010). These examples represent just one instance of the “culture wars” that are evident across American history curriculum. These “wars” take on different forms, based on disagreement over race, religion, politics or ideology, but remain forceful in revising history. Tenenhaus (2010) claims: “Today it is not regional or ethnic identity, but ideological commitment that threatens to submerge larger “national myths.” But one thing remains unchanged from 50 or 60 years ago. As Americans struggle to see where they are going, they continue to gaze fondly at the past — and to see in it what they like” (Tenenhaus, 2010). Each of these is an example of using empirical knowledge about history to make moral or political statements, illustrating, as Dray pointed out, that history is simply not value-neutral.

Two other recent events in history education that have been debated among the mainstream media are Virginia’s Confederate History Month and the passing of a ban on Ethnic Studies classes in Arizona. Virginia governor Bob McDonnell declared April “Confederate History Month” for the state of Virginia in 2010. In

doing so, however, the governor made no mention of slavery as part of this history, a fact that upset many, including President Obama, who claimed that this was “hateful” and that the governor’s declaration coupled with the fact that he made no mention of slavery was inappropriate (Jonsson, 2010). Governor Jan Brewer, of Arizona, signed a law in May, 2010, that banned Ethnic studies classes from Arizona’s public schools, which she justified by saying that students ought to value each other as individuals rather than as members of particular ethnic groups (Cruz, 2010). Many critics claim that this bill, which will withhold state funding from schools who do not comply, actually targets Mexican American studies programs (Cruz, 2010).

The above examples illustrate the necessity of looking at moral statements in history, particularly those statements that are included in history texts, as these serve as the primary source of information for students of the discipline. As a starting point, in the next chapter I will explore specific moral statements that are made in history texts, looking at two key things: the types of moral statements that are actually made in history texts, and the evolution of these statements over time.

The curriculum used to teach U.S. history courses is often the subject of debate (Romanowski, 2009). In particular it seems that these debates center on the content, rather than the methodology of such courses: which events are given coverage, how they are portrayed, and so on. The emphasis of these debates is often driven by values. There are cultural clashes in Virginia and Arizona and tension over the role of religion in the schools in Texas and North Carolina. These conflicts often manifest in discussions over history curriculum and texts.

## **Why Textbooks?**

While education has moved toward integrating more diverse resources into the classroom, textbooks have remained the principal tool of elementary through higher education history educators. Vanhulle (2009) pointed out that “The only historical instrument that pupils are familiar with is in most cases the history textbook” (pg. 263). Still, he claims, professional historians are often not inclined to study textbooks philosophically and noted that, “Although textbooks have been studied in search of bias, nationalism and racism no research has been conducted on the philosophical basis of the construction of historical knowledge in these textbooks” (pg. 265). There is little scholarship, then, to use when these debates over the knowledge constructed by textbooks arise. What is included in texts is likely to determine what students know about history and events that are excluded are likely to send a message about what is viewed as irrelevant or unimportant. Textbooks package the knowledge that authors consider to be worth knowing.

The curriculum debates illustrate that deciding what knowledge ought to be “sanctioned” is no small task because there is little consensus over which knowledge is valuable. Cooper (2007) claimed that what is important for education is not truth, but truthfulness. He takes truth to be a property of beliefs, and truthfulness to be a virtue that can be had by people. Cooper follows Bernard Williams in proposing that truthfulness

[D]evolves in to two dispositions, ‘accuracy’ and ‘sincerity.’ These are the dispositions, roughly, to take due care that one’s beliefs are warranted, and ‘to come out with what one believes (Williams 2002, pg. 45). The former requires honesty, objectivity and effort when forming one’s beliefs; the latter, a

determination to communicate what one believes and, more generally, to be trustworthy communicators who do not mislead (Cooper 2007, pg. 81).

But truthfulness on the part of educators is more difficult to understand than ever in light of debates over what the “true” portrayal of events in U.S. History ought to be. Inevitably, what is included in textbooks will also have an effect on what teachers teach and how truthful they are able to be. Cooper (2007) acknowledges this problem and claims that:

...the older imperative of honest, open dissemination of research results often conflicts with a newer insistence that nothing must be published that might undermine traditional beliefs supposedly important to a people’s, or ethnic group’s, sense of identity” (pg. 81).

Much more could be said about these debates over the morality and history textbooks and as well as the implicit moral statements made by historians in textbooks which include, for example, what is included or excluded and how it is covered (Romanowski, 2009). In addition, it is worth considering whether historians are warranted in making such statements. Before doing so, however, it seems logical to take a look at the texts themselves in order to see what kinds of statements are, in fact, being made, and what kinds of knowledge are necessary to make them.

In this chapter, I offer my own epistemological positioning and give an overview of the historical background to the cases that I analyze, namely, the Japanese-American internment and the bombings of Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. I also outline my study and explain my findings, which will include a taxonomy of the sorts of moral statements that are made about those events in college-level history texts. In the following chapter, I will discuss the implications of

this study by outlining the kinds of knowledge that are relevant to each of the categories of moral statements and how they relate to the problem of historical knowledge.

### **CHAPTER THREE: ETHICS IN HISTORY**

The decision to drop the atomic bomb was the most tragic taken in the long course of American history. It may well be that only so drastic a step could have ended the war and thereby averted the losses which an invasion would have brought on both sides. On the other hand, thoughtful observers have wondered whether the American government, with Japan essentially beaten and on the verge of capitulation, had exhausted all possible alternatives before at last having recourse to drop the bomb- whether there was not evidence of negotiation or demonstration that those have first been attempted, with the bomb laced in reserve as a weapon of last resort. Here perhaps the doctrine of unconditional surrender had terrible consequences. Certainly, the bomb terminated the war, but it also placed America for many years in an ambiguous position before the world as the only nation to have employed so horrible a weapon. (Blum, 1963).

#### **Overview of the Study**

The above passage was written in a textbook that was published in 1963, less than twenty years after the end of World War II. Though the passage could easily have been pulled from a textbook on ethics, the subject matter of the text is actually college-level U.S. History. It is not alone in exploring ethical matters. History textbooks often include moral statements, though their central aim is not to prompt ethics discussions, but rather, to portray historical events. Passages like the one above, which are infused with moral statements, illustrate why debates over the content of U.S. history curriculum are likely to get so controversial.

In chapter two, I claimed that historians often make moral statements in history textbooks that lack the epistemological warrant that are required of historical claims in the same textbooks. Because the focus of history textbooks is primarily on the historical claims, moral statements frequently go unnoticed by teachers and students reading the textbooks, and moral statements may even be taken to be

historical claims (Novick, 1998). Because textbooks are used as educational tools, the use of moral statements in history texts calls for pedagogy that enables students to reflect on the ethics of the historical events that they are studying. This is especially complicated in light of the fact that ethical statements in history often do resemble historical claims. Moreover, ethical statements in history texts often differ from ethical statements in applied or theoretical ethics because in history ethical claims might be forward or backward-looking, while ethical statements in more traditional contexts are more commonly general or forward-looking.

Because moral statements that are made in history textbooks differ from both traditional moral statements and historical claims it seems worthwhile to take a close look at the nature of these claims. Toward this end I designed a study that explores the types of moral statements that are made in history textbooks. In this chapter, I describe the research methods that I used for this study, explain some limitations of the study, and discuss my findings, which will include a theory of moral statements that are made about those events in college-level history texts. The type of taxonomy that I propose is the sort that was called for by Hill (2009). Hill claimed that a taxonomy of moral judgments was needed to identify and categorize moral statements by type in any case where “non-ethical statements” were made alongside “ethical statements.” He proposed that this might be done by a close look at the language of ethical and non ethical statements. Satris (1987) offers some indication of how we might distinguish ethical sentences or statements from factual claims. He claims that ethical sentences, “expresses or calls for non-cognitive attitudes and not merely

beliefs” (p. 91). Satris also distinguishes ethical sentences from imperatives by claiming that ethical sentences can “appropriately be called true or false” (p. 91). The nature of history textbooks means that historical claims and moral statements are difficult to identify and separate, and as such a taxonomy that is based on the particular language use of each claim was an appropriate choice for this study. I follow Satris’s lead in identifying statements as moral statements if they have emotive meaning and a truth-value. In the following chapter, I will discuss the implications of this study by setting out the kinds of knowledge that are relevant to each of the categories of moral statements and how they relate to the problem of historical knowledge.

In order to better make sense of the relevance of knowledge to moral statements in history, I wanted to examine how moral statements are made in history texts. I chose two historical events, (1) the Japanese-American internment, and (2) the bombings of Japanese cities during World War II because both address the same general relationship, that of the U.S. and Japan during World War II. However, they provide very different vantage points, as the literature surrounding the internment considers domestic policy and defensive strategy, while the literature about the bombings deals with foreign policy and military tactics.<sup>4</sup> These events, though similar in some ways, have very important differences. For instance, while the development and use of the atomic bombs was highly publicized after they were dropped, much of the American public had no knowledge of the internment until long

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<sup>4</sup> This is an observation that I made in my analysis, though this sentiment is also noted by Daniels (2002) and Lorenz (1996)

after the war had ended. The story of the A-bombs is highlighted in almost every textbook, while the internment was, until recently, included in very few. Daniels notes this in an article on the social history of the internment. He claims:

Historians, however, generally caught up in the triumphalism generated by victory in World War II, paid little attention. In what was perhaps the most noteworthy American History college textbook of the immediate postwar decades- and certainly the most liberal- Richard Hofstadter and his collaborators in a 1957 volume of 758 pages could say only this in their section on 'Civilian Mobilization' during World War II: 'Since almost no one doubted the necessity for the war, there was much less intolerance than there had been in World War I, although large numbers of Japanese-Americans were put in to internment camps under circumstances that many Americans were later to judge unfair or worse.' Such other college textbooks of the time as Morison and Commager's, 'The Growth of the American Republic' made no mention of what happened to Japanese Americans. By the 1970's however, books about the wartime incarceration began to be included in college reading lists. The general ignorance among the educated continued well in to the 1980s. I remember being asked by a bright senior history major at a good eastern liberal arts college in the mid-1970's if the wartime incarceration I had lectured about 'really happened' and if it had, why had he not heard about it (Daniels, 2005, p. 164).

Bosworth (1994), Goodman (1984) and Nichols (2006) echo this problem of the treatment of the relations between the U.S. and the Japanese during World War II by examining textbooks from Japan, Europe, and the U.S. and comparing the way that events were covered. Each concludes that the telling of these events tends to be done from the victor's perspective, with the atomic bombs treated as a victory and the internment either justified, excluded or, less frequently, given apologetic treatment. The different treatments of the two events made for interesting and useful comparison during my analysis of U.S. History textbooks. In addition, the events are relatively contemporary to one another, and relatively recent in history.

## **Research Methods**

Research on school textbooks requires unique methodology because the material in texts is for a specific, educational purpose. In one sense textbook research sheds light on the structure and dynamics of education and the contexts for which they are a tool. In another sense, as Nicholls (2006) points out, “[T]he level and type of engagement will depend on how the textbook is used in history classes” and as such, “identifying and accepting differences of perspective across international samples of school history textbooks does not in any way tell us how students may be encouraged to engaged with the perspective(s) offered” (Nicholls, 2006, pg. 40). Because of this potential gap between the content of the texts and their utility as pedagogical tools researchers have to be critical in their analysis of the texts and the implications that they draw from their findings.

In order to maintain the integrity of research centering on school textbooks researchers need to follow careful methodology. While researchers use various methodologies in doing textual analysis, analysis of textbooks is idiosyncratic and calls for its own considerations. Nicholls (2003) proposed methodology specific to textbook research in order to address these concerns.

Nicholls claims that “there are few things more important than a precisely defined sample” (pg. 3). Consideration should be given to the number and quality of texts at the very least, and perhaps other factors depending on how the nature and focus of the study. He identifies eleven types of qualitative analysis for textbook research, namely: hermeneutic, linguistic, cross-cultural, discourse, contingency,

historiographical, visual, question, critical, structural, and semiotic. My study used a combination of what Nicholls identifies as linguistic analysis, that is, analyzing the use of language in order to identify statements as moral and not historical, and historiographical research, which is “used to investigate the manner in which the discipline of history is conveyed,” or in this case how history is conveyed in ethical terms. These two methods were more fitting than Nicholls’ other methods because linguistic analysis allowed for me to focus particularly on the moral statements that were made in historical texts while historiographical analysis allowed for a broader look at the function of moral statements in the writing of history.

Pingel (1999) lays out a “list of criteria for analysis” which helps to orient the researcher to the texts that he or she is studying. This list of criteria has five main categories: 1) textbook sector components, 2) formal criteria, 3) types of texts/mode of presentation, 4) analysis of content, and 5) perspective of presentation. In addition, Pingel advocates the development of categories related to the researcher’s own question. Nicholls advocates this use of categories, which is typical in many forms of textual analysis, and claims, “the analysis of school textbooks is based on registering differences, identifying patterns, and making comparisons.” Such categories are useful for the analysis of texts, though as Nicholls notes they also run the risk of allowing bias to creep in to the analysis if the researcher favors the categories that he or she believe to constitute “good” knowledge.

In my study, the development of a taxonomy included the development of two categories of moral statements- forward and backward looking- and multiple

subcategories of statement types. I avoided the risk of bias that Nicholls points out because in identifying the two main categories of moral statements I do not claim that one type of statement is somehow better than the other, but view them both as different ways to use historical knowledge to inform moral statement making. In the next section I will describe the specific methodology that I used for my study in more detail.

### **Selection of the Texts**

I selected textbooks to analyze based on the following criteria: (1) Inclusion of moral statements which are the data points for analysis. (2) Coverage of the events selected. (3) Accessibility in archives or through libraries. (4) Inclusion on the American Textbook Council (ATC) list of widely adopted texts, a council made up of professional historians and independent of publishers that aims to insure the quality of history curriculum through, for example, its list of widely adopted texts. (5) Suitedness for a college-level audience.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, I selected sixteen textbooks, seven of which included coverage of both the bombings of Japanese cities and the Japanese-American internment. The texts are outlined in the table below:

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<sup>5</sup> Information about this criterion was gathered through the use of publishers' websites, lists of textbooks in special collections, and online syllabi available to the public on various university history department websites.

*Table 3: Overview of Textbooks Used for Analysis*

Textbook	Author	Time Period covered in the text	Year of publication	Internment covered?	Bombings covered?
The Making of Modern America	Canfield & Wilden	Post World War II	1954	Yes	Yes
A History of American Democracy	Hicks, Mowry, and Burke	Post World War II	1956	Yes	Yes
History of a Free People	Bragdon & Proctor	Post World War II	1958	No	
Freedom Under Law: A History of the United States	Platt & Neff	Post World War II	1962	No	Yes
The National Experience	Blum, Catton, Morgan, Schlesinger, Stamp & Woodward	Post World War II	1963	No	Yes
History of Our United States	Eibling, King, & Harlow	Vietnam Era	1964	No	Yes
Our Nation from its Creation	Platt & Drummond	Vietnam Era	1964	No	Yes
This is America's Story	Wilder, Ludlum & Brown	Vietnam Era	1966	No	Yes
The United States: A History of a Republic	Hofstadter	Vietnam Era	1967	No	Yes
The United States: A World Power	Hofstadter & Miller	Vietnam Era	1972	No	Yes
The Oxford History of the American People	Morison	Post-Vietnam	1985	Yes	Yes
The Unfinished Nation	Brinkley	Post- Vietnam	1997	Yes	Yes
A History of the United States	Jenkins	Post-Vietnam	1997	No	Yes
A History of the American People	Johnson	Post-Vietnam	1997	Yes	Yes
We the People	Carroll	Post 9/11	2002	Yes	Yes
A People's History of the United States	Zinn	Post 9/11	2003	Yes	Yes

Nine of the textbooks did not include coverage of the Japanese-American internment. Initially, I looked at 36 textbooks, but ruled some out because they did not cover either event in much depth or because, after further research, the texts were more likely to have been used in high school classes than college, even though they were listed as college-level texts in the special collection. I used textbooks that were available through libraries in my own geographic region, inter-library loan services, or in a large and comprehensive special collection of historical textbooks available at Harvard's Graduate School of Education Gutman Library. I chose this historical textbook collection over others available because its list was the most comprehensive and included the most college-level texts. Comprehensive historical textbook archives also exist at Stanford University and Princeton University, but these archives contained primarily K-12 textbooks. Harvard's Gutman Library contains the most complete selection of textbooks available, and also holds a large volume of post-World War II textbooks which are difficult to find elsewhere.

The last criterion is to ensure the likelihood of the work being written by historians and containing moral statements. It is certainly the case that there are moral statements made in K-12 history texts, however, an initial look at the literature indicated that the ethical claims made in college-level history texts are, in general, more likely to contain explicit ethical claims. In order to decrease the variability between the types of claims and the methods of presentation, looking particularly at college-level texts seemed a sound decision. The knowledge gained through this analysis may be applicable to other grade levels and contexts, but, because college-

level texts are more consistently in line with the criteria, I limited my analysis to them.

### **Historical Periods**

After selecting the texts, I classified them into four distinct historical categories because according to Giroux (2004) educational practices and the content of educational materials are likely to change following a large-scale crisis or periods of wide social and political change. Keeping this in mind, I divided the texts into time periods that were likely to illustrate a change in the moral tide or political sentiments. I selected the particular time periods outlined below because the moral and political issues that were a focus of the time correlate with military events that reflect high tension over warfare, the use of weapons, and racial, religious, or cultural profiling<sup>6</sup> with regard to the military.

As a result of such tension over the practices of the U.S. military, I considered them to be the most relevant political changes to the two events that my study focuses on, namely the Japanese-American internment and the dropping of bombs over Tokyo, Nagasaki, and Hiroshima.

The first category are those texts written from 1945-1960, the period immediately following World War II which encompasses the Korean War and arguably the onset of increased U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. I selected this

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<sup>6</sup> By profiling here I am referring to cases in which political or military action was used against particular people because of some kind of cultural, ethnic, or group identity. Examples of this include the relocation of Japanese-Americans during World War II, the profiling of Islamic citizens after the September 11th terrorist attacks, or the blacklisting of Americans believed to be involved in Communist activities during Cold War tensions by politicians such as Joe McCarthy.

period because it reflects the end of World War II, immediately after the bombings took place in Japan and the time period in which Japanese citizens were allowed to return to their homes. The second category is made up of texts written from 1961-1975, during the Vietnam era. This time period was selected because tension over the actions and practices of the military reached at an all-time high. Additionally, there was increased conflict over social issues such as civil rights, which implied that there might be an emphasis on issues regarding race in the text, a topic that is relevant to the friction over the treatment of Japanese citizens during World War II. The third category contains texts from 1976-2000, representing the time between the end of the Vietnam War and the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. This time period saw heightened tension over military issues during the gulf war and conflicts in Kosovo, Somalia, and Iran. The final set is Post-9/11, and includes texts written from 2001-present. This time period was selected particularly because it was a time when military technology and the relevance of race, religion, culture, and the profiling of each of these was highly debated. Table 4, below, outlines these time periods as well as the historical events relevant to each.

*Table 4: Outline of the Historical Time Periods*

Time Period	Years	Major Historical Events
Post-World War II	1945-1963	The Cold War; Immigration and Naturalization Act; Korean War; Growing Conflict in Vietnam;
The Vietnam Era	1964-1975	Vietnam; Civil Rights Movement; Protests on College Campuses; Cuba Missile Crisis; Height of Women's liberation; Space Race
Post-Vietnam	1975-2000	Sandra Day O'Connor; HIV crisis; Gulf War; Kosovo; Somalia; Clinton scandal; stable economy; Oklahoma City bombing; Hostage crisis in Iran; rise in school shootings; Y2K
Post 9/11	2001-2011	September 11 <sup>th</sup> ; War on Terror; First minority president; Natural disasters in South East Asia, Japan, and the U.S.; Declining Economy

### Methods of Analysis

The method I used in this study was content analysis, which is often used as a method of qualitative research in the humanities and social scientists when working with data sources such as texts or media (Nicholls 2003). One aim of concept analysis it is to “describe and make inferences about the characteristics of communication” (Holsti, 1969) by looking at which material is presented and which is excluded, how it is presented, and to whom. Content analysis is commonly used to identify key words and phrases in a text and to organize them into categories. More specifically, in this study I used two types of content analysis identified by Nicholls as linguistic and historiographical analysis (Nicholls, 2003, pg. 3)

Before beginning my analysis, I looked through the texts in order to get a general sense for what the broad categories of moral statements might be. The initial

look confirmed what had been proposed in the theoretical literature, that is, that moral statements in history fall into two categories: forward-looking and backward looking. As I began my analysis, I looked through each text to identify any sections that discussed either the Japanese-American internment or the bombings of Japan. I then read each of these sections closely, identifying each moral claim that was made and putting it in either the forward-looking or backward-looking category. After placing each moral statement into one of these two categories, I looked at each category and tried to make sense of the differences between the types of statements that were within each category. To do this, I looked closely at each statement and identified what its aim was. If that kind of statement had already been identified, it was placed within an existing subcategory, and if it was new I identified a new subcategory. In the end, the two categories, forward-looking and backward-looking, were broken down into six subcategories. Forward-looking statements were either teleological or took an “experiments in living” view of history. Backward-looking statements included those that were statements about actions within their own historical context; statements about actions and events that reflected hindsight; Statements about the ethics of causation; and categorical statements. I explain these further in the following section.

### **Epistemological Positioning**

Perhaps the most difficult part of this project is providing the historical background of the cases that I use for my analysis here. What makes it difficult is writing from an epistemologically neutral position, or without making any sort of

values claims in retelling the past to others. As I explained in Chapter 2, historians do not simply report facts, they have methods much more rich which involve making statements about belief, about probability, about value. Even those positions toward history which themselves claim that history ought to be value neutral make a moral statement, namely that historians ought to work in the realm of facts, and also imply that it is possible to do so.

Judgments about whether historians ought to work with facts or values are just the beginning, however. Historians make many different judgments: which facts are relevant to the narrative? Which evidence ought to be taken seriously, and why? Which conjectures should be followed through to their ends? Which can be falsified, and how? Each of these relies on the making of epistemological judgments, that is, judgments about knowledge, about truth, and about belief. These epistemological judgments are, in part, what can make historians so persuasive. They're not simply reporting on a story, they're deciding what that story should be, and how it ought to be told.

Epistemology is relevant to ethics also. In making claims about ethics, we often make assumptions about the beliefs or intentions of others. We might think very poorly, that is, about someone who harmed another if we believed that she had knowledge that what she was doing was harmful. In contrast, if we think that the same person unintentionally harmed someone, we would be much less likely to be as harsh in our judgments of her, we might, instead, just say that she was ignorant and would have acted differently if she had held different beliefs.

History makes this sort of appraisal doubly complicated. Some views hold that it is well within the historian's purview to make ethical judgments about the subject of his or her study. Still, others claim that the historian ought to, or is only able to, work within the realm of facts. Regardless of whether we take it to be the historian's task to make this appraisal, or we hold that this ought to be a task consigned to some faraway corner of ethics, it is hard to deny that making ethical judgments about practices and times that are foreign or simply notional to us presents some challenges that do not otherwise exist. Events and practices presented by the discipline of history make belief and intentionality complicated, to say the least. While we might not necessarily believe that history is the study of human thought, as Collingwood believed, it is likely that we will at least try to make sense of the past on our own terms, that is, by reasoning through the ethical dilemmas the way we do in real time.

In other words, it's tempting, in reading about a public health crisis in history, to ask the questions that are second nature when we think about public health, such as "were the proper measures taken to stop the spread of infection?" Epistemology is entirely relevant to such questions. What we think about an agent's beliefs or intentions might, ultimately, come to influence what we think about such problems. If the public health crisis took place at a time when little was known about the spread and containment of infectious diseases, then we might not assess the situation by claiming that a public health official ought to have done a better job at these things. Our assessment of this situation will hinge on what we know or think about the

agent's beliefs and knowledge.

As I've tried to outline in the first few chapters, epistemological positions can take a variety of forms. Ethical claims, too, vary in the way that they are structured, and in the propositions that are central to them. Because it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to present historical events with epistemic neutrality, I do not set out to do that here. Instead, I acknowledge that my own epistemological position is likely to be intertwined with the material that I hope to outline.

In offering an overview of the cases, it is my assumption that in order to make moral statements, we ought to assume, as Goldstein does, that:

Points are never so settled- statements so irrevocably established- that they serve as criteria for the truth of all subsequent statements. In history, as in all spheres of inquiry, what is established is always subject to revision in the light of what may subsequently come up (Goldstein, 1976, pg. 46).

In addition, like Collingwood, I believe that history is, at least in part, an exercise in epistemology. In doing writing history, I think that it is intuitive to try to puzzle through the beliefs and intentions of those being studied. As such, like Collingwood, I believe that evidence and the historical process are both relatively fluid, and may change form depending on the questions that the historian asks. First I assume that what can be taken to warrant a claim depends on the questions that the historian is seeking to answer, which minimizes, or even precludes in some cases, the role of consensus in historical inquiry. I also assume that it is unavoidable that the notion of historical truth will change when information is introduced counterfactually. The knowledge that we have about the past, as well as the beliefs we hold about justice, rights, and so on, will almost certainly change our views of ethics. I also think that

Williams's 'relativism of distance' (1985) is warranted in some cases, but with one qualification. I think that this relativism is only something to take seriously when asking specific questions that rely on an understanding of the conditions and experiences of those being studied. Asking whether an agent was right or wrong given his or her own beliefs, for example, might warrant a consideration of the relativism of distance. In contrast, it might not be as necessary to consider this distance if posing a question about whether features of a particular historical time period might be worthwhile additions to current society. In a sense, whether we can actually experience these features as historical agents did is far secondary to the comparative benefits and harms it may bring about in our own society.

With this positioning in mind, in the next chapter I lay out a theory of moral statements in history that is grounded in the data from my study of history texts. This theory explains the types of moral statements that are common in historical writing. I begin by discussing the differences between forward and backward-looking categories of moral statement and then outline the kinds of statements made within each category. Next, I analyze the particular texts used in my study and discuss the use of moral statements in them. Finally, I discuss the relevance of historical knowledge to this theory.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: A THEORY OF MORAL STATEMENTS IN HISTORICAL WRITING**

### **Types of Moral Statements in Historical Writing: An Analysis**

In this chapter I outline the various types of moral statements made in historical writing based on the results of the study that I outlined in chapter three. This theory of moral statements in history includes two broad categories of moral statement: forward and backward-looking. Each of these categories has sub categories within it. Throughout the chapter I will use examples from history textbooks, some from this study and some that were not included in the study, to illustrate the differences between the various types of statements.

#### **Forward-Looking Statements**

In the last section I explained that I had two very broad categories of moral statements identified before beginning my study. The first of these categories is forward-looking statements, that is, moral statements that draw on history to inform the present or future. Within this category of statements I found that there were two particular types of statements: teleological statements and experiments-in-living statements. Teleological statements look to history to tell a broader view of moral progress, while experiments-in-living statements resemble a model proposed by Mill (1859), and view history as a social trial-and-error of sorts, allowing people in the present to observe various ways of living as they have been practiced throughout history. These views have in common the fact that they look at history as evidence that might inform the present in some way.

There are quite possibly other kinds of forward-looking moral statements that might be made by historians in their work. A historian could, for example, cite historical examples of wrong-doing to argue against repeating this wrong-doing in contemporary contexts. Alternatively, a historian might draw parallels between immoral actions in history and current events, reasoning by analogy that the current events might be wrong on the same grounds as the historical events were viewed as wrong. As I will discuss further in the findings, I did not come across statements such as these in my study, perhaps because of the nature of the sources that I used. In my study, I analyzed only sections of the text specifically on the bombings of the Japanese cities and the internment of Japanese-American citizens.

It is possible that these events were referred to as examples in textbook sections that cover other time periods in different ways. A historian writing on more recent bombings that caused civilian casualties might, for example, cite the bombing of Hiroshima as a case of immoral military action. This statement would not be found in the textbook section on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, however, so would not have been included in this study. Further research might show that this is quite common, or even that it constitutes a category of moral statements that I did not recognize, specifically the types of statements made about events in sections of history textbooks that actually have different events as their focus.

In my study, however, I focused only on moral statements made about events in sections that focused particularly on them in order to analyze the event as a whole because this provides more depth and context specifically because the events are

isolated and narrow in scope. In the following section, I will further explain the types of forward-looking moral statements that I did identify in this study, teleological statements and experiments-in-living statements. While in some cases there might be some overlap between categories and particular statements may well fit in to more than one category, I have used them here in the category that they fit most closely within.

**Teleological Views.** Teleological moral statements are statements that look at particular events and actions to paint a broader picture of moral progress or regress. Teleological moral statements are an extension of theories put forward by Leibniz (1714), Kant (1784), Hegel (1837), and others who viewed history as a closed set of related events. They believed that history had a distinct beginning and end and that it was, in essence, a web of causal events. Historical events, in teleological statements, serves as gauges of sorts, checkpoints, or positions on a timeline, all in order to track moral progress. Periods of infirmity might be compared to periods of "health" in order to make statements about their frequency, duration, and so on.

For a statement to be teleological it must meet at least one of the following three criteria: (1) Teleological statements may situate the event being described within a broader picture of moral progress. (2) Teleological statements may compare the event to previous events in order to make the case that moral progress is or is not being made. Finally, (3) teleological statements may cite a future goal of moral progress in order to justify or criticize a particular event or action. Wilder (1966) uses a teleological statement. He writes:

In all the great changes of recent times, the United States has taken a leading part. Out of these great changes there could grow a new and better world, but only if the nations of the world can maintain law and order and keep the peace. In this chapter we shall learn why the peace which people hoped for at the close of World War I did not last. We shall see how the leaders of certain countries, anxious to gain power, brought about the outbreak of the World War II. And we shall learn what steps the United States has taken to maintain peace, including the development of the Manhattan project.<sup>7</sup>

This example illustrates the third criteria for teleological moral statements.

Wilder, in this case, justifies the Manhattan Project in light of a future aim of moral progress, namely growing a “new and better world” and the maintenance of peace. A second teleological statement can be found later in the same section of Wilder’s text:

People of every period of history have probably believed their own times to be unusual. Our fathers, our grandfathers, our great-grandfathers all have believed that there was something special about the age they lived in. Our own age is no exception. But perhaps in the 1900’s we have better reasons for thinking so than earlier generations had. Twice within 25 years our world has been engulfed in terrible wars. The family of nations has grown tremendously as many peoples in Asia and Africa have gained independence.” (Wilder, 1966)

This example illustrates the second criteria for teleological moral statements.

Wilder seems to reflect on moral progress when he claims, “...perhaps in the 1900’s we have better reason for thinking so than earlier generations have,” and citing examples of both moral progress and moral regress. In contrast, the following example from Blum meets three criteria for teleological moral judgments:

Victory thus came- but in a way that converted triumph into tragedy. The Second World War was at an end. Perhaps twenty million men had been under (illegible) total casualties amounted to over a million with nearly three hundred thousand dead (illegible) battle. Now, in the autumn of 1945, the world stood on the threshold of a new epoch in human history- an epoch incalculably rich with

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<sup>7</sup> The Wilder text was found in Harvard’s Gutman Library archives and because of its poor condition, the page numbers were illegible.

hazards and potentialities. With faltering steps mankind was entering the atomic age. (Blum, 1963, p. 634)

Blum first situates the atomic bombs within the larger context of World War II, and then he considers the moral progress or regress indicated by this event in his statement, “the world stood on a threshold of a new epoch in human history- an epoch rich with hazards and potentialities.” Finally, with his nod toward the age that “mankind was entering” he makes an appeal toward some kind of future aim or progress.

These examples, though very different from one another in some regards, each illustrate teleological statements in the way that they appeal to a broader picture of moral progress or moral regress. Not all forward-looking statements make such an appeal. In the next section I will outline a different sort of statement, experiments-in-living, where an author does not appeal to history as a moral continuum but rather a series of different moral periods, some valuable and some shameful or tragic.

**Experiments in Living.** The second type of forward-looking statement that I identified in this study was the type of statement that looks to history to offer experiments in living of the sort that Mill (1859) discussed. Experiments-in-living statements are forward-looking statements because they look beyond the virtues and vices of a particular time period and aim to assess whether the general state of affairs of a particular time period is desirable as an option for people in the present. For a statement to be an experiments-in-living statement it must aim to take the moral temperature of the time period and then to decide whether this temperature is desirable or not.

These statements tend to portray history as a closed set of human contexts that can inform the present (Turchin 2008, Habermas 1991). They follow Mill (1859) in looking to history to provide experiments in living, that is, information about ways in which people have lived which can be used to weigh the relevant benefits and drawbacks of each. Such statements rest on an assumption that historical conditions are always live options given the ability to recreate the conditions under which they existed. Statements that view historical conditions as live options might be statements about which systems are best to return to, which histories should repeat themselves, and so on. This view might hold that a particular period of societal health might be isolated, and that the conditions that constructed it might be replicated in order to repeat it.

Hofstadter (1967) made the following experiments-in-living statement in response to discussion about developments in science spurred by the A-bomb:

And yet, as such social crises as the depression at home and World War II abroad showed, the conventional values of civilization- mercy and justice, liberty and democracy, the humanistic values Krutch and others considered 'childish'- were not to be shirked because of the ascribed indifference of the universe to them. (p. 542).

Hofstadter makes much of the overall values of society at the time of the Atomic bombs and makes a claim that, overall, the time period was an inherently good one. In other words, it looks at what might be viewed as a negative occurrence, that of the Atomic bomb, and looks to the events surrounding it to see if it was part of a particularly bad historical context or whether it was an outlier of sorts to its context. This is an experiments-in-living statement because it isolates a particular time period

in an attempt to assess it on the whole. This kind of statement differs from a teleological judgment because it looks to history as a more distant entity.

Teleological statements aim to chart a clear path of progress and so point to causal sequences and a connectedness between events. In contrast, experiments-in-living events point to isolated time periods as being options for the present. On this view, one time period might be better than the one preceding it, but might also be followed by a time period that is worse than it. There is no necessary progression from one time period to another.

Hicks (1956) makes an experiments-in-living statement about the use of the atomic bombs, however he views the atomic bombs as symptomatic of an all-around low point in human history:

The most terrible war in history had ended in the most terrible display of force. The world has proven lawless and penetrable to great scientific gambles. (Hicks 1956, pg. 640).

Mumford (1946) used an experiments-in-living statement to illustrate his distress at the use of the atomic bombs just a year after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He wrote:

You cannot talk like the sane men around a peace table while the atomic bomb itself is ticking beneath it. Do not treat the atomic bomb as a weapon of offense; do not treat it as an instrument of the police. Treat the bomb for what it actually is: the visible insanity of a civilization that has ceased to worship life and obey the laws of life. Say that as men we are too proud to will the rest of mankind's destruction even if that madness could for a few meaningless extra moments save ourselves. Say we are too wise to imagine that our life would have value or purpose, security or continuity, in a world blasted by terror or paralyzed at the threat of terror (Mumford, 1946, p. 286).

Mumford is clearly expressing a terror caused not only by the use of the atomic bombs, but in a world that would allow for such weapons to be used. His

statement, therefore, reflects not only the action of using the bombs but the moral condition of the world at the time. Oé (1995) expressed similar horror in a world that would allow for the use of weapons like the atomic bombs. He wrote:

For my part, I have a kind of nightmare about trusting in human strength or in humanism; it is a nightmare about a particular kind of trust in human capability... My nightmare stems from a suspicion that a certain 'trust in human strength,' or 'humanism' flashed across the minds of the American intellectuals who decided upon the project that concluded with the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. That 'humanism' ran as follows: If this absolutely lethal bomb is dropped on Hiroshima, a scientifically predictable hell will result. But the hell will not be so thoroughly disastrous as to wipe out, once and for all, all that is good in human society. That hell will not be so completely beyond the possibility of a human recovery that all mankind will despise their humanity merely at the thought of it. It will not be an unrelieved hell with no exit, or so devastatingly evil that President Truman will, throughout his life, be unable to sleep for thinking of it. There are, after all, people in Hiroshima who will make the hell as humane as they possible can... I suspect that the A-bomb planners thought in such a way; that in making the final decision they trusted too much in the enemy's own human strength to cope with the hell that would follow the dropping of the atomic bomb. If so, theirs was a most paradoxical humanism. (Oé, 1995, p. 434).

Like Mumford, Oé's statement asserts that the bomb isn't simply an isolated action but reflective of a more general moral trend. Experiments-in-living statements, along with teleological statements, make up the category of forward looking moral statements in history textbooks. In the following section I discuss backward looking moral statements.

### **Backward-Looking Statements**

The second broad category that I identified in my initial look at the data was a category of backward-looking statements, that is, statements about history that look to make an ethical assessment of the past without expressly relating them to present or

future debates. My analysis of the texts identified four distinct types of statements that fit in to this category: 1) virtue statements, 2) categorical statements, 3) consequentialist statements, and 4) hindsight statements.

The first type of statement, virtue statements, aims to conduct a moral appraisal of historical actions or events given the context and considerations of the time that they occurred. Statements that take in to account hindsight intend to reflect on the moral status of a particular action and event with regard to what we now know about the time period and how the events of the particular time period played out. Hindsight statements aim to make this appraisal with a bit of reflection, and may also include moral statements about blame and praiseworthiness of various actions and events. Consequentialist moral statements, following in the tradition of John Stuart Mill (1859) and Jeremy Bentham (1789), also draw on hindsight to make their appraisal. In contrast to hindsight-statements, however, consequentialist statements look to the state of the world brought about by the particular event or action in order to make their appraisal. Finally, categorical statements assess actions and events in history by holding them to universal moral principles such as, “torture is categorically wrong.”

My study’s coverage of the category of backward-looking moral statements is, in my view, more comprehensive than that of the category of forward-looking moral statements. As I explained in the introduction to the section on forward-looking moral statements, some forward-looking moral statements may have been excluded from the analysis based on the fact that they used one event to form the basis of a

moral statement about another through analogical reasoning. In other words, a forward-looking statement, for example, “the suggestion to quarantine patients with HIV was dismissed because as we have seen in cases such as the Japanese-American internment, quarantine is not only immoral but may lead to political unrest” would be included in the textbook section devoted to the subject that it is being informed (e.g. in this case the HIV crisis), rather than in the section that is used to inform (e.g. in this case the Japanese-American internment).

In contrast, backward looking statements commonly place the emphasis on actions and events themselves, regardless of their instrumental value. A consequentialist moral statement, for example, would determine the moral status of using the atomic bombs based on the general attitudes toward warfare that was brought about by the use of the bombs. In the following sections I will go into greater detail about each type of backward-looking statements by outlining the criteria for each kind of backward-looking moral statement, and by offering some theoretical explanation and examples for each type of statement.

**Virtue Statements.** Virtue statements about historical actions are often made with consideration given to the circumstances at the time when the event took place. For the purpose of this study, moral statements were identified as virtue statements if they 1) emphasized the presence or lack of a desirable trait or characteristic; and further, 2) if they place the virtue within the context of the moral and political tides of the time at which they occurred. Often, I found virtue statements to be the statements

that were made most casually, frequently in a rhetorical manner, and not as an intentional way of making a particular point.

Virtue theory is most closely associated in the history of philosophy with Aristotle (350 BCE/2009). The theory dictates that in order to live well individuals must have a good character, valuing honesty, courage, and so on. A person who flourishes, then, will be the person who truly internalizes virtues and exercises them correctly. The individual would not merely act honestly, for example, because it seems the simplest way to act or because they fear some consequence of being dishonest. Rather, the virtuous person acts honestly because he or she values being an honest person. Hursthouse (1991) writes:

I suppose that one of the reasons we find it so hard to come to terms with the Holocaust is that pre-Nazi German society looks so like our own at the same period, and we are forced to the unpalatable conclusion that if it happened there because of lack of virtue in its members, we must have been similarly lacking and might have gone the same way (p. 264).

Hursthouse, in this case, was using a virtue ethics approach to morality. She claims that the right thing to do is always what a person with good character would do. The Nazis, she argued, were not people of good character, not people who possessed virtues or exercise them adequately. Virtue statements in history texts tend to fault similar instances of poor character or to praise cases of excellent character.

Carroll (2002) included the following virtue-based account of the internment of Japanese-American citizens:

‘Has the Gestapo come to America?’ responded one angry Nisei citizen. Forced to sell all their property at a fraction of its value and transported to ten concentration camps in remote parts of the country, most Japanese Americans

stoically accepted exile as proof of their loyalty. As administered by the government's War Relocation Authority, which called the prisoner's 'colonists,' the camps were bleak, primitive, and terrifying. (p. 432)

Carroll is implying that the Japanese Americans relocated during World War II were virtuous because they were loyal and stoic in the face of conditions that might otherwise turn people to vices. Others, the implication seems to go, might not have been stoic or loyal to the United States when confronted with "bleak, primitive, and terrifying" conditions. This example illustrates the first criteria for virtue statements, the stipulation that virtue statements emphasize the "presence or lack of a desirable trait or characteristic."

Brinkley (1997) makes a similar kind of statement about the virtue of the atomic bomb and the traditionally American characteristics that he claims that the bomb illustrated:

The A-Bomb was a 'democratic' bomb, and was spurred on by the genuine idealism of the peculiarly American kind. Many of those involved in Manhattan felt that liberty and decency, the right of self-government, independence, and the international rule of law were at stake, and would be imperiled if Hitler got the bomb first. In this sense, the nuclear weapons program of the US was very much part of the immigrant input into American society. Oppenheimer was of Jewish immigrant origins and believed that the future of the Jewish race was involved in the project: That was why he built the first A-Bomb. It was equally true that Dr. Edward Teller, of immigrant Hungarian origin, who built the first H-Bomb, was convinced that by doing so he was protecting American freedom from the Stalinist totalitarian system which had engulfed the country of his forebears. Fear, altruism, the desire to 'make the world safe for democracy,' as much as capitalist method, drove forward the effort. Nuclear weapons were thus the product of American morality as well as of its productive skill. (p. 784)

Brinkley metaphorically calls the A-bomb a "democratic bomb," which was "spurred on by genuine idealism" (p. 784). He also writes that those involved with

the project were motivated by a threat to “...liberty and decency, the right of self-government, independence, and the international rule of law...” (p. 785) the implication being that these were taken by those involved in the Manhattan project, to be virtues of a democratic society. Further, Brinkley cites the motivations for the Manhattan Project as being directly tied to their context. Oppenheimer, he claims, “was of Jewish immigrant origins and believed that the future of the Jewish race was involved in the project: That was why he built the first A-Bomb” (p. 785) and he then claims that Teller was similarly motivated by his Hungarian roots. He argues “[f]ear, altruism, the desire to ‘make the world safe for democracy,’ as much as capitalist method, drove forward the effort” (786). Brinkley’s statement that particular virtues or vices were appropriate or inappropriate given the particular time or context places these statements in the category of virtue ethics statements rather than another category, such as categorical issues which are more universal. I will give an overview of categorical moral statements in the following section.

**Categorical Statements.** Categorical moral statements aim to analyze history through the use of universal claims about morality. This category of statement is not offered with consideration for time, consequences or context. For a moral statement to count as being categorical, it must be at the very least 1) universal in nature, and 2) made without regard to the consequences of the particular action or event.

Categorical moral statements are most commonly associated with the work of Immanuel Kant, and in particular with Kant’s central work on this topic was *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) which dictated that moral

statements ought to be made with regard to duty or obligation and not with regard to consequences. These statements are also sometimes called deontological statements. Kant's primary contribution to deontological ethics may be the categorical imperative, which has three iterations, the most famous of which is, "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, 1785/2002, p. 283). This imperative was at the center of Kant's moral philosophy.

In Kant's view, human morality is tied to rationality, and, he argued, what is right is what rational people do, and so the categorical imperative is an imperative that is universally and objectively to be upheld. Duties and obligations, to Kant, were not tied to particular contexts and remained duties and obligations regardless of their consequences. Categorical statements, then, are those statements that dictate that an action is right or wrong regardless of its context or consequences.

Zinn (2003) included many of this kind of statement in his *People's History of the United States*. One such example includes the following statement, made about the use of the atomic bomb and addressing the question of whether members of the American government had known about the bombing before it took place. "...Immoral it was, like any bombing- but not really sudden or shocking to the American Government" (p. 411). This example is fairly straightforward. It is a categorical statement because it asserts that the use of bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were wrong and, further, that every bombing is wrong. Zinn holds this to

be categorically true, and is unlikely to be persuaded by arguments that appeal to the consequences of particular bombings.

The following example from Canfield (1954) is similarly clear-cut:

“Roosevelt, like any leader in his position would have, responded to threats to security by issuing Executive Order 9066” (p. 632). In this example, Canfield is claiming that Roosevelt was right to endorse Executive Order 9066, and that any leader in his position,” likewise, would also have been right. The language of each of these examples makes it fairly clear that they are categorical statements- they appeal to objective morality without regard to context or consequence.

The following example is also a categorical moral statement, though its discourse may not be as straightforward:

Some critics of the decision, including some of the scientists involved in the Manhattan Project, have argued that whatever the Japanese intentions, the United States, as a matter of morality, should not have used the terrible new weapon (Brinkley, 1997, p. 771).

Brinkley writes that some critics held that the atomic bombs were immoral “as a matter of morality” (p. 771). Further, he dismisses the potential consequences of the atomic bombs and the question of whether the use of the atomic bombs was just with regard to Japanese intention. By dismissing such things, he is appealing to a universal moral standard that holds consequences to be irrelevant.

In contrast to Brinkley, Sayle (1995) makes a categorical statement not about actions but about persons. In an attempt to characterize American perceptions of the Japanese, Sayle writes:

But, loathsome as they were, the Japanese were also terrifying, like any madmen ready to die for a cause; reasonable people would never have begun a war like theirs in the first place. They also seemed to have superhuman courage... Sheltered behind concrete bunkers and barriers of coconut logs, Japanese soldiers worked their machine guns until they died or were burned out by flamethrowers. They rarely surrendered, and then only in ones or twos, usually wounded. How, then, short of extermination, could they ever be defeated? (Sayle, 1995, p. 27).

In this example, Sayle is claiming that “reasonable people” act in a particular way, and do not fight the way that the Japanese did during World War II. Categorical statements may be the most straightforward and easily identifiable in the text. Along with consequentialist moral statements they are also perhaps share the most overlap with the way that traditional moral statements are made outside of history textbooks. In the following section I will outline consequentialist moral statements.

**Consequentialist Statements.** The most common ethical claims made about history are claims that focus on the notion of causality. The point of analysis for some statements is located in the state of the world that is thought to have been brought about by a particular action or event. For a moral statement to be considered a consequentialist moral statement it must appeal to the consequences of a particular action to justify it.

Consequentialist moral statements are most closely associated with Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, proponents of the most commonly known consequentialist philosophy, utilitarianism. Mill and Bentham both held the view that an act or omission is right if and only if it maximizes particular goods and minimizes particular harms. There are varying views over what these particular goods are, they may be happiness (Mill, 1863) or preferences (Singer, 2003) in consequentialist

theories that focus on actions. In contrast, consequentialist theories may hold that particular rules (rather than actions) are right because of the generally good consequences that they bring about (Hooker, 2002).

One example of a consequentialist moral statement comes from Bernstein (1986), a critic of the atomic bombs who questioned whether the numbers being reported by U.S. officials were accurate. In describing what he called “a post-war myth” (p. 131) Bernstein writes:

The claim of a half million American lives was a post-war creation. Shortly after the Nagasaki bombing, Winston Churchill declared that the atomic bombings had saved well over 1,200,000 Allied lives, including about a million American lives. General Leslie Groves, commanding general of the wartime atomic bomb project who was proud of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, suggested that Churchill’s number was “a little high” (Bernstein, 1986, p. 131).

Brinkley (1997) also employed a consequentialist moral statement in defense of the use of the atomic bombs. He wrote, “nothing less could have persuaded the Japanese to surrender without a costly American invasion” (p. 771). In other words, he holds that the act of using the atomic bombs against Japan was the cause of Japanese surrender. The implication of Brinkley’s claim is that Japanese surrender was a good thing and that bringing it about caused enough good to justify any harm that it also caused. Eibling (1964) makes a similar claim:

Then, on August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the industrial city of Hiroshima. The city was almost annihilated. Nearly 80,000 of its people were killed outright. Thousands more were burned or injured in other ways. This terrible weapon was used so that an invasion of Japan, which might have cost hundreds of thousands of lives, would be unnecessary (p.342).

He explains the terrible harm, including the “nearly 80,000” people who were “killed outright,” by the use of the atomic bombs and then considers the “hundreds of thousands of lives” that may have been lost if the bomb had not been used and an invasion of Japan had become necessary. Ultimately, he concludes that the use of the bombs was justified given the consequences that an omission may have brought about.

Messer (1985) offers a strikingly clear example of a consequentialist statement about the use of the atomic bomb in which he outlines the number related to the use of the atomic bombs and explains that these numbers led Truman to justify his decision to use the bombs. He writes:

In announcing the bombings the President had said that they were carried out in order to ‘shorten the agony of war’ and save ‘thousands and thousands of American lives.’ Later he would be more specific, citing the estimated 250,000 Allied casualties in a prolonged war. These ranged from 500,000 to 5 million. Official U.S. estimate of Japanese killed in the atomic attacks totaled about 110,000. Thus, in saving more lives than they took, the atomic bombings were justified as the lesser of two evils. After the war Truman said that he had been told that the population of the target cities was about 60,000. Hiroshima’s population was in fact more than 350,000 and Nagasaki’s about 280,000. Of these, nearly 200,000 were killed and 150,000 injured. At the time few could argue with such logic (Messer, 1985, p. 91).

Consequentialist moral statements share one particular thing in common with each of the other kinds of moral statement that I have outlined so far. Each looked to the actions and events of history and made statements about them from their own vantage point. A very different discussion about ethics might take place if we allow the use of hindsight. In the following section I will discuss the final kind of moral statement identified in my analysis of history textbooks, hindsight statements.

**Hindsight Statements.** Statements with the benefit of historical distance, we might claim, allow us more insight in to the actual state of affairs at the time. These moral statements take a “god’s eye view” of the action or event, utilizing the knowledge we now have about the state of affairs at the time of the action or event. This might include a reflection on what can now be known to have been going on concurrently, or knowledge about the intentions of other parties involved in a particular conflict. Johnson (1997) used hindsight in his appraisal of the Japanese-American internment in the following statement:

Predictably, this racial animosity soon extended to Americans of Japanese decent. There were not many Japanese Americans in the United States- only about 127,000, most of them concentrated in a few areas of California. About a third of them were unnaturalized, first-generation immigrants (Issei); two-thirds were naturalized or native-born citizens of the United States (Nisei). Because they generally kept to themselves and preserved traditional Japanese cultural patterns, it was possible for others to imagine that the Japanese Americans were engaged in conspiracies on behalf of their homeland (There is no evidence to suggest that they actually were.). The public pressure to remove the ‘threat’ grew steadily (p. 763).

Johnson is giving what appears to be a strictly historical account. Even the moral statement, which is seen in the parenthetical, appears at first to be a historical statement. The example takes a moral turn, however, if we consider how college students reading textbooks might interpret this.

Johnson’s (1997) parenthetical about the lack of evidence suggesting that Japanese-Americans were “engaged in conspiracies on behalf of their homeland” implies that the act of interning Japanese-American citizens is wrong based on the knowledge we now have about the intentions and plans of citizens at the time. It

leaves open whether the internment was morally permissible based on the knowledge at the time, thus making it a moral, rather than strictly historical statement. Moral statements in history texts hold the potential for various types of engagement and discussion. Students could be expected to engage, for example, in debates about whether there is or isn't evidence, whether warrant for the moral statements could come from hindsight, and so on.

Rawls (1995) also makes use of hindsight in the following moral statement:

Truman was in many ways a good, at times a very good president. But the way he ended the war showed he failed as a statesman. For him it was an opportunity missed, and a loss to the country and its armed forces as well. It is sometimes said that questioning the bombing of Hiroshima is an insult to the American troops who fought the war. This is hard to understand. We should be able to look back and consider our faults after fifty years. We expect the Germans and the Japanese to do that... why shouldn't we? It can't be that we think we waged the war without moral error (Rawls, 1995, p. 478).

Alperovitz (1995) uses the type of hindsight that Rawls calls for when he writes:

"Ask the average person why the United States exploded the atomic bomb over Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the answer will almost always be straightforward: 'to save thousands of lives by making an invasion unnecessary at the end of World War II....' The only problem with this morally comforting explanation is that it is now known to be false (Alperovitz, 1995, p. 5).

Alperovitz is making clear use of hindsight in this case by claiming that historical evidence has made it difficult to use common justifications for the atomic bomb.

Messer (1985) discusses this use of hindsight statement by commenting on President Truman's feelings toward it:

Sharing this concern about how future historians might judge the bomb decision, Truman lent his full support... after retiring to private life he repeated- in private interviews, public statements, and his two-volume memoirs- that he had always regarded the bomb strictly as a weapon and had no doubt or regret, either at the time or in retrospect, about the necessity or wisdom if its use against Japan. Any speculation about how things might have been done differently was based upon hindsight. Truman frequently cut off any further discussion of the subject with the observation that 'any schoolboy's afterthought is worth more than al the generals' forethought.' (Messer, 1985, p. 92).

Hindsight statements are the final type of moral statement that I identified in my analysis of history textbooks. While Messer's explanation of Truman's stance on the atomic bombs is not a moral statement in its own right, it does illustrate how complex hindsight statements and other types of moral statements in history are. In the following section I will discuss how this theory of statements illustrates the problem that I identified in chapter two of my dissertation. In this study I analyzed two cases that were covered in a total of 16 textbooks. Below, are two tables that outline the moral statements found in my study. These tables are not meant to provide a comprehensive overview of the moral statements that I found in historical writing, but rather to offer an overview of the number of judgments that were made about each event and during each time period. In analysis section that follows the tables I will discuss the findings further by contrasting the statements that were made about the internment with those made about the use of the atomic bombs and then by comparing the statements that were made across the various time periods. These comparisons are useful in understanding the implications of historical writing and the ways in which it changes and frames our understanding of particular events.

*Table 7: Analysis of Ethical Claims about the Japanese American Internment*

Time Period	Teleological	Experiments in Living	Consequentialist	Virtue	Hindsight	Categorical	Claims sympathetic to the Japanese
Post World War II	1	5	7	0	1	2	1
Vietnam Era	2	2	1	0	1	0	0
Post-Vietnam	8	4	15	5	2	4	14
Post 9/11	3	7	10	4	9	17	16

*Table 6: Analysis of Ethical Claims about the Bombings of Japan*

Time Period	Teleological	Experiments in Living	Consequentialist	Virtue	Hindsight	Categorical	Claims Sympathetic to the Japanese
Post World War II	12	4	34	20	3	24	30
Vietnam Era	5	2	31	22	9	45	31
Post-Vietnam	13	7	17	11	16	31	11
Post 9/11	11	4	19	14	8	17	26

### **Presentation of Historical Material Between Events and Across Eras**

Although U.S. textbooks cover both the use of atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the relocation of Japanese-Americans from the west coast to internment camps during World War II, there are striking differences in the treatment of each event. Many of these differences change or become more apparent depending on the time period in which they were written, but there are a few differences in the

inclusion of the two events that seem universal across these time periods. The most noticeable difference was the variance in the coverage given to each event.

The use of the atomic bombs had a dramatic impact on U.S. history and this is made clear by the exhaustive treatment of the bombs that is given in all of the textbooks included in the study, across each of the time periods. In contrast, the coverage of the Japanese-American Internment was inconsistent. Some textbooks covered the internment extensively while others gave it no more than a description of a sentence or two. Nine of the sixteen textbooks included in this study made no mention of the internment at all.<sup>8</sup> My particular study focused on the analysis of specific moral statements made and the relationship of knowledge to these claims, so I was unable to give adequate attention to the exclusion of events or detailed coverage of events, but others who have engaged in text analysis have also recognized this kind of exclusion.<sup>9</sup> The degree of coverage given to each particular event is critical to understanding the implications of moral statements in historical writing because it paints a clearer picture of the kind of information being articulated or implied in historical writing. If an event is not covered in a given text then the implication is that it is not worth coverage.

There are other key differences between the coverage of the atomic bombs and the coverage of the Japanese-American internment. The U.S. is typically the focus of the sections on the atomic bombs. Whether the author is expressing support

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, of the nine texts that excluded coverage of the internment, eight were published between 1958 and 1972. None of the Vietnam Era texts included coverage of the internment.

<sup>9</sup> Romanowski (2009), for example, noticed omissions of the invasion of Afghanistan and attacks on Islamic groups in the wake of September 11th, 2001.

or disdain for president Truman's decision to drop the atomic bombs it seems that the focus of such sections tend to be on the agony that went along with the U.S. decision to use atomic force. The dramatic impact of the atomic bombs on American morale is made clear across each of the historical time periods represented by the textbooks in this study. As tables 5 and 6 show, until September 11th, hindsight statements were used far more frequently in the coverage of the atomic bombs than in the coverage of the internment. Across time periods, authors seem much more conflicted about the moral status of the atomic bombs while coverage of the internment showed clear changes in the moral tide as authors first took for granted that it was justified, then stopped talking about it, and then began to claim that it was unjustified. The use of hindsight statements reflects this because often they are employed when authors are raising questions about the moral status of a particular event given what is now known about the event and the actual state of affairs at the time. For example, in sections that cover Hiroshima and Nagasaki authors might mention what the U.S. believed about, for example, Japanese surrender, the population of Hiroshima, and so on and then compare these beliefs to evidence about the actual population of Hiroshima and the state of the Japanese military at the time to discuss whether the bombings were necessary and justified.

In contrast, it wasn't until post-September 11th that authors began to make similar claims about the Japanese-American internment. One author (Carroll, 2002) makes a hindsight statement and mentions the lack of evidence that Japanese-American citizens were engaging in espionage while living in the United States and

the eventual apology that was offered by the U.S. government to the families of those citizens who were relocated. This kind of statement is only recently seen in the literature on the internment, however, and earlier authors took for granted that the internment was necessary and justified if they mentioned it at all.

A final noticeable difference between the coverage of the two events is the level of sympathy expressed for the Japanese in the wake of the bombings or the internment. As illustrated in the table above, sympathy for the Japanese-Americans sent to relocation camps has remained relatively the same across the historical periods. The number of claims sympathetic to the Japanese has increased but the depth of coverage about the internment has also increased and so the percentage of the overall coverage of the internment that is sympathetic to the Japanese has remained relatively stagnant.

In contrast, percentage of statements made about the atomic bombings that are sympathetic to the Japanese has not been as stable across the historical periods. During the Post-World War II, Vietnam, and Post-9/11 eras the statements made that were sympathetic to the Japanese were a just less than half of all of the statements made. During the Post-Vietnam era, however, the number of sympathetic statements made dropped dramatically. It's not clear whether this drop was a function of the political climate of the time or some other factor but it is evident that there was a change in the way that Americans viewed Japanese victims of the atomic bombings at the time. I discuss implications for using historical writing in the classroom in chapter five, but this unexplained change and others like it undoubtedly raise

questions about the use of history texts. For example, how do the students taught with Post-Vietnam era texts compare to those taught with texts from the other historical periods with regard to their views of the moral status of the atomic bombs? Further, it would be prudent to ask how these variant views of the victims of the bombing shape and inform a society's understanding of the bombings. How, for example, might different views of the morality of the atomic bombs also influence positions and policies on different contemporary foreign conflicts? I address these questions in more detail in chapter five.

There are also differences between the ways that sympathetic statements about the internment are presented in contrast to sympathetic statements about the atomic bombs. The majority of statements in historical writing that were sympathetic to the survivors of the atomic bombs were matter of fact, and presented these victims as civilians who were unfortunately caught between the bombs and a government who believed themselves to be a divine power. A very distant and undetailed portrait of the victims is painted. The following example from Todd and Curti (1966) is representative of the kind of claims that are made about the atomic bombs:

On 6 August 1945, at eight-fifteen in the morning, a solitary plane crossed over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. It flew very high. A few people looked up. No alarm was sounded. Then, suddenly, the city disintegrated in a single searing atomic blast. Nearly 100,000 of the 245,000 men, women, and children in Hiroshima were killed instantly or died soon after. Thousands of others suffered dreadful after-effects. A few days later, a second bomb fell on Nagasaki, another Japanese city. A new force had been added to warfare, a force that would enormously complicate relations among nations in post-war years (1966, p. 739).

In contrast, statements that are sympathetic to the victims of the internment are, for the most part, more detailed and less detached. While descriptions of Hiroshima and Nagasaki mention “men, women, and children” without much detail or description, statements that are sympathetic to the victims of the Japanese-American internment paint a more personal picture:

The surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii had stunned the nation. After the bombing, panic-stricken citizens feared that the Japanese would soon attack the United States. Frightened citizens believed false rumors that Japanese Americans were committing sabotage by mining coastal harbors and poisoning vegetables (Danzer, 2003, p. 594).

Danzer’s reference to the internment offers greater detail about the particular fears that spurred the call for relocation of Japanese-Americans from the west coast. This reference is also characteristic of the level of detail that was included in many of the statements made about the internment in the data set used for this study.

In addition to noticeable differences between the statements made in historical writing about the atomic bombs and statements made in historical writing about the internment, there were also very apparent differences between the historical time periods in terms of the number and kind of moral statements that were made during each. One of the most apparent differences between time periods is the level of description given about each event and about conflict between the U.S. and Japan more generally.

The presentation of the material was one way in which the texts changed over historical time periods. On the whole, texts from the post-world war II era and the Vietnam era presented their ideas in a very matter of fact way, outlining the nature of

the various events that amounted to the conflict between Japan and the U.S., and presenting the Japanese as a people on a mission to conquer neighboring lands in the name of a divine emperor. The texts from these historical periods can be characterized by attempts to present only the facts, and little detail about the events was offered. In fact, the internment was excluded entirely from Vietnam era texts. In contrast, during the post-Vietnam era explicit moral statements and bolder speculation was more common. The following extracts from textbooks illustrate this difference. The first, a quote from Blum (1963) illustrates the descriptive nature of claims made during the earlier two eras. Blum, in this case, is describing the thoughts and opinions of critics rather than making a moral statement of his own. This kind of description is characteristic of the statements made during this time period:

On the other hand, thoughtful observers have wondered whether the American government, with Japan essentially beaten and on the verge of capitulation, had exhausted all possible alternatives before at last having recourse to drop the bomb- whether there was not evidence of negotiation or demonstration that those have first been attempted, with the bomb laced in reserve as a weapon of last resort (Blum, 1963, p. unknown).

In contrast, statements made during the post-Vietnam era are much bolder in their statements. For example, Sayle (1995) writes:

But, loathsome as they were, the Japanese were also terrifying, like any madmen ready to die for a cause; reasonable people would never have begun a war like theirs in the first place (Sayle, 1995, p. 27).

This passage seems much more straightforwardly a moral statement, and not a re-telling of someone else's account. Post-9/11 historical writing is more critical still. In addition to offering much more detail about Japanese culture before World War

II,<sup>10</sup> moral statements in texts from this historical time period were less speculative and more definitively critical:

All the camps were located in desolate areas. Families lived in wooden barracks covered with tar paper, in rooms equipped only with cots, blankets, and light bulbs. People had to share toilet, bathing, and dining facilities. Barbed wire surrounded the camps, and armed guards patrolled the grounds. Although the government referred to these as relocation camps, they were concentration camps” (Cayton, 2003, p. 858).

There were also significant differences in the way that specific content was presented across historical time periods. For example, during the post world-war II, Vietnam, and post-Vietnam eras the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were presented most often as one event or in one section. For example, Todd (1977) writes:

[T]he face of war is the face of death; death is an inevitable part of any order the wartime leader gives... war in the twentieth century has grown barbarous, more destructive, more debased in all its aspects. Now, with the release of atomic energy, man’s ability to destroy himself is nearly complete. The bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended a war. They also made it wholly clear that we must never have a war. This is the lesson men and leaders everywhere must learn, and I believe that when they learn it they will find a way to lasting peace (Todd, 1977, p. 738).

Many post 9/11 Textbooks, on the other hand, presented Nagasaki and Hiroshima as separate but related events. Textbook headings often used the names of both cities rather than using headings such as “The Atomic Bombs.”<sup>11</sup>

There are other differences between the treatment of particular content across time periods as well as changes in methodology and presentation. Contemporary

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<sup>10</sup> Including, for example, detail about the 1922 ban on immigration from Japan and photographs of Japanese “picture brides” from the early 1900’s (Ogawa 2005)

<sup>11</sup> This heading was used in Canfield, 1954.

texts, for example, included many more narratives of those who experienced the events. There are also differences between the ways that each event was presented, regardless of the historical time period. Each example of the ways that historical writing differs from text to text, era to era, raises important questions about the use of historical writing as a teaching tool. I will discuss the implications of these questions and examples in chapter five and will also discuss how history pedagogy might take these moral statements in to account, and what strategies might help students critically address moral statements in historical writing.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: “HOW GOOD A HISTORIAN SHALL I BE?”**

Few other events have influenced recent U.S. History as much as President Truman’s decision to use the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The use of nuclear weapons against Japan showed the world that the U.S. was capable of mass destruction and raised questions about how history would tell the story of the bombs in the post-war world. Would history portray Truman’s crisis of conscience over the decision to use nuclear force? The agony that Albert Einstein felt over hearing about the destruction in Hiroshima? How would historians’ accounts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki compare to their accounts of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

The relocation of Japanese-American citizens from the west coast raised similar questions about how historians would negotiate the ethical issues connected with the relations between the U.S. and Japan in their narratives about World War II. Nicholls (2006) showed that there are significant differences between the way that Japanese and the U.S. textbooks portray the conflict between the two during the Second World War. He wrote, “[E]vidence suggests that perhaps the biggest influence on textbook perspectives of the past are the current political agendas of nations here in the present, portrayals of the Second World War reflecting current political concerns” (p. 40).

Nicholls’ observations are consistent with the findings of my own study. There were significant differences between the coverage of the internment and atomic bombs across historical time periods which reflected the political struggles and tide of each. The military struggles that the U.S. was engaged in during each of these

historical time periods defined the moral and political outlook of the nation. In essence, the U.S. was a very different nation during each era. An examination of the differences between the portrayals of historical events across time periods make it clear that history is not about straightforwardly factual claims, and that a great deal of the work involved in the teaching of history is or should be critically engaging the various narratives and sources that present historical events.

In a discussion over the nature of history education, R.G. Collingwood wrote:

When we think of history as merely a trade or profession, a craft or calling, we find it hard to justify our existence as historians. What can the historian do for people except turn them in to historians like himself? And what is the good of doing that? It is not simply a vicious circle, whose tendency is to overcrowd the ranks of the profession and to produce an underpaid ‘intellectual proletariat’ of sweated teachers. This may be a valid argument against the multiplication of historians, if history is merely a profession, but it cannot be if history is a universal human interest; for in that case there are already as many historians as there are human beings, and the question is not ‘Shall I be a historian or not?’ but ‘How good a historian shall I be?’ (Collingwood, 1930, pg. 3)

If history is, as Collingwood claimed, “a universal human interest,” then the differences between the moral statements found in historical writing ought to give us pause for thought. How should history teachers negotiate and make use of such different types of moral statements or of the existence of ethical commentary in historical writing at all. The two historical cases that I analyzed in this dissertation provide rich examples of how epistemology and ethics intersect in historical inquiry. The historian’s task in determining a research project may not be as simple as it seems. He or she must consider the type of research question that is appropriate to

ask, not only given the context of the research program that he or she is a part of, but also in light of the various ethical consequences of that question.

Of course, if history is of universal human interest then engaging in historical writing is also a process of determining what history students know about the past by way of deciding what events and perspectives are included or excluded from each historian's telling of history. In addition to determining which events are included or excluded from historical writing, the way in which events and perspectives are included or excluded also influences what students will know and think about historical events. For example in 1950 students would have been using textbooks that included some coverage of the Japanese-American internment and would have been discussing the internment at a time when the Emergency Detention Act of 1950 was being passed by the supreme court. This act mandated that the government refurbish many of the detention camps used to hold Japanese-Americans less than a decade earlier in order to detain "persons for whom there were reasonable grounds to believe would commit or conspire to commit espionage or sabotage" should the president declare an "Internal State of Emergency" (Daniels, 2005, p. 165).

Would the relevance of internment to the political struggle of the Cold War prompt justification of the Japanese-American internment? Or, given that the 1950 act mandated trials for anyone imprisoned in a camp would the Japanese-American internment be viewed as primitive and barbaric in classroom discussions? Within eight years of the Emergency Detention Act of 1950 coverage of the Japanese-American internment would vanish from textbooks altogether. It is nearly impossible

to believe that the internment could have been taught without any consideration of morality and value. Likewise, it seems impossible that concerns over terrorism, racial and ethnic profiling, and the conflict in the middle-east can be entirely separated from textbook coverage and classroom discussion of the internment in the post-9/11 world.

The role of theory, testing of hypotheses, and selection of evidence are also key examples of the centrality of epistemology to making ethical claims in the teaching and writing of history. The use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is often cited as necessary in order to prevent U.S. bombings that were planned for other Japanese cities in August, October, and November 1945 and would potentially result in 1,000,000 civilian casualties, not to mention the U.S. troops that might be lost in the Pacific before the bombings occurred (Walker, 1990 and Brook, 1968). The atomic bombs contributed, at least in part, to the Japanese surrender and the end of World War II, proponents of this view argue. Critics of this view claim that Japanese surrender was inevitable, and that the bombing of Nagasaki was unnecessary and morally questionable.

This example illustrates the kinds of epistemological issues that are raised when a historical topic is highly value-laden. Levisohn (2010) points out that ideological bias inevitably shapes historical narratives and historical knowledge. He writes:

The central problem is the way that those biases seem to give rise to multiple possible accounts of the same historical events. For a conscientious historian and for conscientious history educators—this problem is both epistemological and practical. How should we tell stories about the past? How should we teach those stories? (Levisohn, 2010, pp. 1-2).

This problem is evident in historical writing. Discipline-specific standards of evidence, coherence, and argumentation still result in inconsistent portrayals of historical events. Levisohn argues “the question of which narrative we should teach would seem to be dependent (at least in part) on the question of which narrative is true” (p. 2) and this seems to be a common-sense solution to a problem of competing narratives. The trouble is that it is nearly impossible to determine which narrative is true, particularly when morality is central to the issue at hand. Are textbooks that portray the atomic bombings as nothing more than an unethical show of power on the part of the United States correct in maligning President Truman, or are less critical texts correct in making utilitarian arguments to justify the bombings with arguments about the amount of potential casualties staved off by Japanese surrender?

Identifying the types of moral statements used in historical writing is an important step toward critically engaging with historical writing in the classroom. Good historical inquiry, as Collingwood (1930) claimed, does not stop at presenting historical events in truthful ways, and includes historiographical processes such as the evaluation of evidence, analysis of claims, and scrutiny of various accounts.

Identifying the types of moral statements made in historical writing satisfies two aims. First, the existence of moral statements serves as a reminder that critical engagement with history is necessary. Second, it serves as a starting point for historiographical inquiry because it provides categories of statement to look for in history texts and to discuss in history classes. In the following section I will explore

how an analysis of moral statements in historical writing warrants a call for a pluralist approach to history education.

### **Teaching History, Talking Morality**

Identifying and analyzing moral statements in historical writing serves two purposes: First, it provides the impetus for critical discussion of multiple perspectives and moral issues in the history classroom. Second, the categories that I have established in this dissertation provide a starting point for these discussions by giving educators and students statement-types that are identified and thereby more easily recognized in reading and discussion. Accounting for and outlining the differences between eras also provides stimulus for critically engaging with historical material because it implies that the historical writing that is being used in today's history courses will be similarly reflective of our own political biases and cultural trends. Essentially, today's historical writing amounts to an independent, less-than-objective perspective of its own, an idea that is rarely considered in history education (Nicholls 2006). Being aware of the differences in historical narratives over time is also a reminder of how our own moral and political biases are reflected in historical writing today.

As an impetus, this study should serve to unsettle traditional teaching methods and beliefs that as a discipline history works with facts of the matter and straightforwardly objective accounts. It also should serve as motivation to ask how disagreement or different perspectives ought to be used in the history classroom.

What is the significance of these different perspectives and of the variation among and between historical narratives? Nicholls (2006) argues:

The significance of textbook perspectives cannot be understood outside of the context in which students engage with them. Likewise, if students are encouraged to grapple with perspectives within a framework that is sensitive to cultural differences then, perhaps, there would be less reason for concern. Critical engagement stands in contrast to the memorization of a single perspective. Equally, it requires students to evaluate, to assess, and to make tentative judgments, refuting the idea that all differences are simply relative (pp. 52-53).

In other words, the very fact that differences of perspective and differences of opinion exist over historical events and are documented in historical writing ought to drive a critical engagement with the material presented in the classroom.

Identifying types of moral statements should not only motivate critical engagement with historical writing, this identification also serves as a resource or starting point for a more historiographical approach to doing history. Levisohn (2009) explains: students of history, whether professional

Students of history whether professional historians or relative novices, are always dealing with events that are already narrativised by others. Typically, in fact, the events in question are over-narrativised; the story has been told many times, in many ways, implicitly and explicitly, by those close to the event and by others more distant from it. The constructive work of the historical inquirer, then—the creation of historical narratives—is always a product of a negotiation among multiple narratives, both ‘first level’ primary-source narratives and ‘second level’ historiographical narratives. The cognitive activity of the historian [may] be described as that of grappling with other narratives of various sorts and at different levels (p. 11).

The identification of the different types of moral statements, then, offers historians or students of history individual points to look for in order to identify differences between narratives. If Levisohn is right, and the “constructive work of the historical

inquirer... is always a product of negotiation among multiple narratives” (p. 11), then the categories of moral statements function as a way of identifying the different narratives and understanding their differences. Identifying a moral statement as consequentialist, for example, makes the aim of the narrative clear in order to compare it with other narratives.

Professional historians engage in historiography by looking at existing narratives, reflecting on the evidence given in support of them, supporting or critiquing their methods and arguments. A similar historiographical approach can be taken in the classroom by highlighting moral statements within one textbook and allowing students to engage critically with them and then with the arguments and objections that they create in discussion with one another and as a class.

But why moral statements rather than straightforwardly historical claims? The answer to this question is not easy. Debates in the philosophy of history leave the question of whether we can really learn about morality by looking to the past unsettled and unanswered. To simply claim that moral statements ought to somehow take priority over historical claims because this will teach us how to act morally would be naive. Rather, moral statements are well-suited to this sort of critical engagement or historiographical approach because so many of the allusions that we see made to history outside of the classroom are allusions to morality. Questions of historical apology, debts, and revenge are all references to morality in some way. Therefore, engaging students by looking at the sort of statements- moral statements- that are relevant to their world is a commonsense way to involve them in meaningful

inquiry. For example, if students are using social networks to make comments about the ethics of Pearl Harbor, then using moral questions as a stimulus for historical inquiry about Pearl Harbor is a way to engage interests that students already have, and having a guide for identifying moral statements can aide in this inquiry.

Another difficult question to address is the issue of what the ultimate aim of such critical engagement is. Should students be encouraged to be aware of moral statements in order to navigate around them in pursuit of consensus? In the following section I suggest a method of pluralism for history education that is based on Nicholas Rescher's pluralism. This method would put consensus aside as the aim for history education and focus instead on putting the plural narratives and perspectives to work toward a more critical understanding of and engagement with history.

### **Pluralism: A Theoretical Overview**

Some scholars such as Novick (1998) are eager for historians to come to some kind of consensus in their portrayal of historical events, but is this sort of aim a realistic one? Rescher (1993) outlines three notions of consensus about matters of fact:

1. De facto consensus as present here and now in the community ('of all' or 'of the knowledgeable experts').
2. Ultimate consensus as it will (presumably) come to exist in the community, in the eventual future ('in the long run').
3. Idealized consensus as a hypothetical eventuation that would be reached under ideal (though doubtless never actually realizable) conditions. (Rescher, 1993, p. 28)

Rescher claims that consensus is an unrealistic goal for matters of fact, value, or action. He argues that valid disagreement can actually be both useful and

productive. A similar model of pluralism is useful in history education as a way of making the different perspectives and narratives offered in historical writing useful and significant components of teaching about history. Built primarily on the idealism of R.G. Collingwood (1940), the critical pedagogy of Joe Kincheloe (2003) and the pluralism of Nicholas Rescher (1993), pluralism is the view that the present's relationship to the past as one of critical engagement. Historical truth, from this view, is multi-faceted and comes from plural perspectives, and is concerned with matters of value. Most central to this view, however, is the belief that plural views are not only necessary, but also inevitable, in gaining a complete understanding of the world.

Pluralism, like consensus-reliant theories, has a great deal of gradation. Aristotle (350 BCE/2009), for example, believed that there was objective scientific knowledge (*episteme*), which relied on empirical demonstration and was focused on the object of study, which was not prone to change. *Episteme* was contrasted to consensus-reliant epistemic beliefs that Aristotle claimed were sufficient to navigate the social world. Consensus was sufficient for everyday matters, but scientific knowledge was of a different sort. Rescher (1993) describes this distinction in Aristotle's work:

Consensus thus provides a validation for claims-albeit not by way of their authentication as genuinely scientific knowledge (*episteme*), but by way of their substantiation as cognitively appropriate belief (*pistis*). In this way, premises adequate for the inferences and reasoning's of everyday life situations become available through a consensus of informed people (either everyone, or the appropriate experts or, at least, the majority of people). In this way, as Aristotle saw it, consensus enjoys an important albeit subordinate status in the epistemic scheme of things- a status which, although not one of ultimate authority, is at least one of substantial weight." (Rescher, 1993, p. 21)

In chapter two I introduced objections to the idea of making moral statements in historical writing and about history, offered by Bernard Williams and R.G. Collingwood. Collingwood (1956) argued that moral statements had no place in historical inquiry, while Williams (1985) claimed that it was impossible (or nearly so) to make moral statements about historical practices. Pluralism seems to offer a practical response to both of these objections. To Collingwood, Rescher might claim that moral judgments are “inevitable” based on differences “in the times, societies, and circumstances” (Rescher, 1993, p. 77). In reply to Williams, Rescher might respond that there is some pragmatic value to making moral statements about past practices and events in teaching about history even if there is little certainty that we can come to any kind of objective conclusion about the moral permissibility of the practices and events that are being taught. Rescher would likely even claim that disagreement over moral statements in history can be productive and useful.

Rescher (1993) argues that pluralism is a more realistic and livable method of research and inquiry than methods which facilitate and aim for theoretical/cognitive consensus. He argues that the difference between the consensualist and the pluralist is as follows:

1. The consensualist: ‘Do whatever is needed to avert discord. Always and everywhere work for consensus.’
2. The Pluralist: ‘Accept the inevitability of dissensus in a complex and imperfect world. Strive to make the world safe for disagreement. Work to realize processes and procedures that make dissensus tolerable if not actually productive. (Rescher, 1993, p. 5)

Rescher and other pluralists (Benhabib, 2006) argue that cognitive consensus, in fact, can actually be counterproductive to the production of knowledge, because it allows people to believe that, in fact, consensus demarks truth when, in reality, researchers can come to consensus over a proposition that is not true and may actually be biased or misleading. In a way, the idea that rationality and consensus lead to true belief allow for less critical examination of claims that are made within projects of research.

Rescher (1993) describes four aims for pluralism: “(1) Legitimate diversity; (2) restrained dissonance; (3) acquiescence in difference, and (4) respect for the autonomy of others” (pg. 3). Rescher’s condition, that diversity is legitimized, is crucial to a plural notion of history. The social system must work to make society safe for difference. Society can not simply consider different points of views and ways of living; it has to restructure itself in a way that this consideration is embedded. Rescher argues that, “A sensibly managed social system should be so designed that a general harmony of constructive interaction can prevail despite diversity, dissensus, and dissonance among individuals and groups- that differences can be accommodated short of conflict” (Rescher, 1993, pp. 3). But, he claims, this requires that “people can and should, to everyone’s benefit, accept and come to terms with the idea-and the fact- that others will differ from themselves in opinion, in evaluation, and in customs and modes of action.” This understanding of pluralism, that its acceptance is for “everyone’s benefit,” makes clear why the consideration of epistemology is key for a pluralist framework.

The rational and productive reaction to dissensus is not so much that we 'tolerate' others as that we respect their autonomy- that we concede their right to go their own variant way within the framework of such limits as must be imposed in the interests of maintaining that peaceful and productive communal order that is conducive to the best interests of everyone alike. (Rescher, 1993, pp. 3-4).

It's not simply enough for variance of opinion and ways of living to be acknowledged, it must be deeply considered, and this variance often occurs across historical boundaries. Who is included in this consideration of "to everyone's benefit?"

In pluralist contexts, in contrast, there are other objections to overcome.

Rescher argues that there are two key questions that must be addressed by pluralists:

(1) How are we to evaluate these positions on our own account? Are we to dismiss those that differ from the one we ourselves favor, or are we to see them all as deserving of consideration and some positive response presumably stopping short of actual acceptance? (2) How are we to evaluate the posture of those who adopt those variant-positions? Are we to acknowledge that they are (or may be) proceeding in a way that is appropriate and legitimate given their situation and circumstances? These two issues are clearly different and distinct. And even if we are fully committed to the correctness of our position in some sphere (the medicine of our own day, for example) we may nevertheless acknowledge that other people (the Greeks of Galen's day, for instance) are fully entitled and rationally justified given their situation, in holding the views that they do (1993, p. 100).

Collingwood's view of history offers benefits similar to Rescher's pluralism, but also faces the same objections. Nevertheless, Collingwood's views are useful in constructing a method of pluralism that can deal with both the epistemic and highly disputed ethical elements of history. Collingwood claims that human history is a rational process, rather than a process of natural cause-and-effect, and its proper subject is the human mind, and human experience. Because Collingwood's

understanding of what the historian's interest should be was the study of mental processes, his view of history is necessarily at odds with the position that history is strictly about facts. For Collingwood, history's subject could not be simply empirical because the various subjects of study are as unique and gradated as any two humans might be. He maintained that historical actions ought to be studied through the motives of human minds rather than natural cause-and-effect, making history a history of humankind, not a natural history. He did not argue that the historian's methodology should not be empirical, but simply that it called for a more flexible and narrative-based method than those used by researchers in the natural sciences. For Collingwood, all history ought to be "unduly confined the scope of the subject" (Tosh, 1999, p. 115). Collingwood and Rescher's theories are both consistent with a critical constructivist notion of epistemology. Joe Kincheloe (2005) argued that there is a particular critical lens that must be applied to epistemological assumptions. This lens includes the consideration of the "knower, and the known," (2003, pg. 229), the acknowledgement of politics and power in the consensus over, and construction of, knowledge; the context of knowledge and truth; one's place in the web of knowledge and truth; and the idea of multiple realities, in other words, the understanding that not everyone constructs the same "Truth," and that, in particular, the truth of those who have been oppressed by existing societal truths must especially be heard in the construction of new truths and new knowledge. Pluralism is more easily able to deal with the idiosyncrasies of historical work because it allows for plural methods and plural doctrines to be mediated.

Collingwood (1956) describes the concept of Scissors and Paste history (pg. 276), which he claims is the sort of pseudo-history done when a historian looks simply at the perceived truth-value of the claims that he or she makes, and writes simply the “facts” (Donagan, 1962). Genuine history, Collingwood argues, only occurs when the historian gives up his or her own epistemic beliefs to assume the epistemic beliefs of those she is studying, and, in the process, uncovers the meaning behind the actions or occurrences of the past (Collins, 1976).

In making moral statements, discussing content that is inherently ethical, or in deciding what is important for inclusion in curriculum, epistemology weighs heavily on the historian’s task. The pluralist’s approach to history can best make use of historical writing because the approach is practical, with an emphasis on history not as a retelling of wars and conquering, but as an idiosyncratic, in-flux, perhaps informative body of knowledge. In addition, this model allows for ethical consideration, and pushes history students to consider the ethical relevance of historical statements, rather than viewing it simply as a process of “cutting and pasting” evidence and reports, with an emphasis on politics and warfare.

In making moral statements in historical writing or in using such historical writing to teach history, it is crucial for historians to point out the epistemological relevance of these statements. This is where it becomes clear that critical-pluralism is effective for classroom use. It is particularly important that those who have traditionally had less access to knowledge, or, as Kincheloe (2008) argues, those who have been marginalized by existing societal truths, have much voice in constructing

new truths which will, in turn, allow them access to, rather than hinder their quest for, knowledge. This is particularly clear when the subject at hand is historical knowledge. Plural views of historical knowledge, rather than consensus over historical knowledge, actually force a critical evaluation of the source and context of that knowledge. But questions still remain for pluralism: what sort of methodology does this leave the historian with? What is a practical way to handle differences of opinion in historical writing?

### **Practical Considerations of Pluralism**

Pluralism is an appealing theoretical standpoint because it addresses the problem of disagreement in history as well as the moral nature of historical writing. Identifying the kinds of moral statements that are used in historical writing, analyzing these statements, and observing the trends in the way that moral statements are used makes it clear that methods of teaching that do not recognize these differences, trends, and statements are inadequate for cultivating the kind of critical engagement that is necessary for good historiographical thinking and historical inquiry. The moral and epistemological debates over history present a puzzle for educators, however. Acknowledging that moral statements do influence the way that historical narratives are presented, it is important to make sense of how these statements and the differences between portrayals ought to be handled. Pluralism offers a way to avoid postmodern conceptions of history which do not build in methods for being critical of differences between narratives (Prozorov, 2009). What does pluralism offer in the way of practical methods for the history classroom?

The first practical benefit of pluralism as a method of history education is that it engages students in discussions of historical writing that are similar in nature to the work of professional historians. Pluralism calls for the consideration of multiple perspectives, analysis of dissenting views, and evaluation of various sources of evidence. This process is consistent with the work and methods of professional historians and thus avoids becoming the kind of “scissors and paste” history that Collingwood criticizes as being unconcerned with the role of history as a universal human interest (Collingwood, 1940). A student who is taught about the Japanese-American internment in a classroom where students are encouraged to critically engage with the historical writing that they are presented with would go beyond learning the important and undisputed facts about the internment and would develop the skills to compare multiple portrayals and analyze their content, evaluate claims of justice and injustice and to consider the broader significance of the internment to history and to civilization.

Levisohn (2009) outlines what he calls an epistemology of history for history education.

[H]istorical inquiry is appropriately characterized as a negotiation among narratives that historical narratives, rather than emerging from the inventive mind of the historian, are generated by a process of negotiation; and that this conceptualization enables us to escape from a picture of historical narratives being imposed by the historian on an unnarrativised past. Instructors of history, like historians, are always in the position of constructing a narrative out of narratives for themselves, and, in their scholarship or their pedagogy, of intervening in the negotiation among narratives of others (Levisohn, 2009, p. 18).

Levisohn maintains that negotiation as a necessary function of historical inquiry gets around unappealing solutions to the problem of diverse accounts in historical writing which is to “quote a bit of Foucault or Lyotard, attempting to capture a flavour of the postmodern intellectual zeitgeist” (Levisohn, 2009, p. 9).

Negotiation is a central feature to a pluralist method for history education. Negotiation should be encouraged as something students ought to do when they read two divergent accounts of a historical event, but it should also be viewed as a tool for classroom teaching. History courses that are discussion-based are key to fully putting the differences and moral statements used in historical writing to work for the most complete and critical understanding of the past.

Iris Murdoch (1992) argues that that developing a sense of moral imagination is critical to any discipline that views morality as central to it and in which competing narratives are inevitable. Johnson (1993) defines moral imagination as the process of “imaginatively discerning various possibilities for acting in a given situation and envisioning the potential help and harm that are likely to result from a given action” (74).

This kind of moral imagination can be fostered through history education that relies on negotiation as a means of guiding group discussion and inquiry. Engaging with historians as well as peers about historiographical questions will lead to the kind of critical engagement that straightforward lecturing cannot emphasize.

One objection to the proposal that pluralism be the theoretical lens employed in history education in light of the theory of moral statements that I presented in

chapter four is that it is an unnecessary proposal or that it is already standard for history educators to engage in this kind of historiographical stance. Nicholls (2006) points out, however, that this is not true. He claims that for the most part students are not expected to engage with historiographical reasoning or justifications and instead are being taught in a very traditional and formal way. The identification and analysis of moral statements should go far toward constructing a pluralist framework for critical engagement with historical writing.

### **Conclusion**

If the coverage of the interaction between Japan and the United States is any indication, historical writing is a complex, in-flux, multi-perspective and morally-charged narrative of our past. The relationship between ethics and history is an intricate one. It is unclear what would be considered evidence of moral progress, whether the past should influence our present actions, and how we can best appraise historical events and actions.

Still, the fact that there is a connection between ethics and history seems undeniable. But how best to study this connection? Collingwood once wrote, “it is always with a sense of relief that, after arguing the hind leg off a donkey, one goes out in to the field to look at the animal for oneself” (Collingwood, 1965, pg. 96). The most obvious first step toward understanding the complexities of the relationship between ethics and historical knowledge is to look at historical writing and the way that it is used.

History texts have little significance apart from the way that they are engaged with and used by students. Understanding the way that moral statements are used in historical writing is the best approach to beginning to make sense of the relationship between ethics and history because it can serve as a stimulus and guide for historical inquiry. The work outlined in this dissertation would make an important contribution to the work of professional historians, teacher-educators, and the professional development of history teachers who want to address the ethical elements of writing and teaching history. The categories of moral statements that I outlined in this dissertation offer historians, history educators, and students with a starting point from which to begin to understand the presence and function of moral statements in historical writing.

The Tōhoku tsunami is fresh in our memory and the comments made about the tsunami being a karmic effect of the attack on Pearl Harbor on social networking sites strike most as insensitive, misguided, and even offensive. These comments, however, could just as easily be have been made in a U.S. History course. If they had been, how might an educator have made sense of this historical reference? Pluralism might not answer this question directly, but it does offer a means of addressing this perspective as one among many. Rather than dismissing the comment as simply offensive or wrong, pluralism compels educators to engage students in a discussion over comments of this sort in the way professional historians might engage with controversial positions such as Holocaust Denial.

The ability to identify moral statements in history serves as an impetus for this kind of engagement. The debates over the content of U.S. history courses illustrate a way in which this theory of moral statements would be useful. Recognizing the shifts in moral sentiment, politics, and so on, and understanding the way that moral statements function in historical writing would allow for critical discussion about the goals for and purpose of history education. This understanding would also allow for the curriculum debates, which tend to be abstract and unfocused on engagement, to forge an association of historical writing with the students who will be engaging with the writing.

So is the Tōhoku tsunami payback for Pearl Harbor? Was the U.S. justified in using nuclear force against Japan? Would the Japanese have surrendered if the atomic bombs were never used? Is internment moral? Was the relocation of Japanese-Americans from the west coast of the United States ultimately justified? Navigating the junction of ethics and history, these questions- along with so many more- are questions for the history classroom.

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