

Contents

Introduction	1
1 The truth and fairness of historical descriptions	13
<i>The truth of history</i>	20
<i>Some alternative responses</i>	42
<i>Fair descriptions of the past</i>	57
2 The truth of historical generalizations and classifications	62
<i>The truth of general terms</i>	65
<i>The truth of metaphors in history</i>	75
3 Descriptive explanations	82
<i>Describing events</i>	86
<i>Describing lives</i>	97
<i>Describing societies</i>	102
<i>The objectivity of descriptive explanations</i>	109
4 Historical interpretations	111
<i>Interpreting events</i>	114
<i>Interpreting people's lives</i>	117
<i>Interpreting societies</i>	121
<i>Literary interpretations of history</i>	125
<i>The objectivity of historical interpretations</i>	129
5 The meaning of texts	134
<i>The basic meaning of a text</i>	135
<i>Interpreting the secondary meaning of a text</i>	144
6 The truth of cultural history	156
<i>The objects of cultural history</i>	157
<i>The inadequacy of hermeneutical circles</i>	163
<i>Interpretation without misrepresentation</i>	167
<i>The New Historicism and its problems</i>	169

7 Causal, contrastive and functional explanations	172
<i>The covering-law model and its critics</i>	173
<i>Causes and causal explanations</i>	177
<i>Functional explanations</i>	194
<i>The objectivity of causal explanations</i>	204
8 Explaining individual actions	209
<i>Identifying the causes of actions</i>	211
<i>Can reasons be causes?</i>	237
9 Explaining collective actions	240
<i>Collective actions as expressions of common dispositions</i>	242
<i>Rational explanations of collective actions</i>	245
<i>Explanations which assume common interests</i>	250
10 Explaining social changes	259
<i>Explanations which refer to individual actions</i>	261
<i>The regularity (positivist) theory of explanation</i>	262
<i>The use of comparative methods to provide causal explanations</i>	270
<i>Process explanations using theories of social change</i>	281
11 Should we privilege the individual?	290
<i>Methodological Individualism</i>	290
<i>Lyotard's critique of 'grand narratives'</i>	297
<i>The value of the particular</i>	302
Conclusion	307
<i>References</i>	310
<i>A Philosophical and Reflective Works</i>	310
<i>B Historical Works</i>	318
<i>Names Index</i>	323
<i>Subject Index</i>	326