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‘To Read Another Man’s Soul’: Excerpts from an Unpublished Work of Nikolai I. Kareev, Historian, Sociologist, and Methodologist

Abstract

The article studies an unpublished methodological and scientific work of Russian historian Nikolai I. Kareev ‘General methodology of the humanities’ (1922). Few historians worked with the manuscript (some in 1970s, some in 1990s and some in 2010s), but thanks to their articles it is known to scholars. Nikolai I. Kareev wrote this book in 1922, summarizing his legacy, and particularly his methodological research, but censorship restrictions prevented its publication. It studies various issues of the humanities through the lens of positivism. Historiographically, it partly continues Alexander Lappo-Danilevsky’s course ‘The Methodology of History’, read at the University of Petrograd; after Lappo-Danilevsky’s death in 1919 the course was to pass on to Nikolai Kareev. But ‘General metodology’ is an original course, and one written from a different standpoint. The article introduces the publication of an excerpt from ‘General methodology.’ The excerpt includes four paragraphs from chapter 4, ‘Direct observation and statement of facts in the humanities,’ describing the notion of historical fact and its working principles. The published excerpt assesses the role of psychology in historical research, which is significant, as Kareev considered society a result of mental interaction of personalities; it puts Kareev's reasoning in context with the notion of ‘alien animations,’ which necessarily follows from his psychologization of history. The text is reconstructed according to an autograph by Nikolai Kareev stored in the Research Division of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library (NIOR RGB). The autograph bears Kareev’s marks: strikethroughs, underlines, inserts on the fields. The document is published in accordance with archaeographical rules.

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Keywords

Historical source, Nikolay I. Kareev, methodological heritage, ‘General methodology of the humanities,’ fragments, psychologization in history, early Soviet period.

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