

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

AN INTRODUCTION

W. H. Walsh

Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in
the University of Edinburgh



HARPER TORCHBOOKS
Harper & Row, Publishers
New York and Evanston

CONTENTS

<i>Prefaces</i>	7
<i>i</i> What is philosophy of history?	ii
<i>z</i> History and the sciences	3°
3 Historical explanation	48
4 Truth and fact in history	72
5 Can history be objective?	93
6 Speculative philosophy of history: Kant and Herder	117
7 Speculative philosophy of history: Hegel	134
8 Some further writers	157
<i>Additional Essays</i>	
(A) The limits of scientific history	169
(B) Historical causation	188
<i>Note on books for further reading</i>	207
<i>Index</i>	211

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY: An Introduction. Revised edition

Copyright © 1967 by W. H. Walsh

215

Printed in the United States of America.

This book was originally published under the title *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* in the Hutchinson University Library by Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., London, the first edition was published in 1951, the second in 1958, and the revised, here reprinted by arrangement, in 1967.

First HARPER TORCHBOOK edition published in 1960 by Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.,
10 East 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10022

Revised HARPER TORCHBOOK edition published in 1968.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 68-58119

PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION

In this enlarged edition the main text appears as amended for the 1958 edition, except for minor verbal changes. A few notes have been added, and these are put in square brackets. The note on books for further reading has been completely revised. But the main change is that, thanks to the generosity of the publishers, I have been able to add two more recent essays in the same general field. 'The limits of scientific history', which was originally published in *Historical Studies* III in 1961 and is reprinted here by kind permission of Messrs Bowes and Bowes, develops points made briefly in my previous Appendix II, now omitted. 'Historical causation', given as a paper to the Aristotelian Society in 1963 and reprinted here by kind permission of the Society, attempts to fill a somewhat serious gap in the previous treatment. Both, as will be obvious, are written with more of an eye to historical practice than was the book itself. If I were to write the book again now I should hope to make this change throughout..

I should like to dedicate the book in its new form to my friend and former tutor in history, Robin Harrison, Warden of Merton College, Oxford.

W. H. W.

1967

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

The range of topics this book seeks to cover is the subject of its introductory chapter. To sum the matter up in terms which are convenient if pretentious, Chapters 2-5 may be said to deal with questions in the logic of historical thinking, whilst Chapters 6-8 form a critical discussion of various attempts to arrive at a metaphysics, or metaphysical interpretation, of history. If any reader expresses surprise that matters so different should be treated in a single volume, I can meet him half-way by admitting that I am conscious of the incongruity myself; though I do not feel so clear as I once did that the problems which are touched on in my final chapters are wholly irrelevant to those treated in the earlier part of the book.

To avoid misunderstanding, I should make clear that my primary aim is to write for philosophers, not for historians. It seems to me very odd that teachers of philosophy should with such unanimity expect their pupils to discourse on the logic of the natural sciences and mathematics, with which subjects few of them have much close acquaintance, and scarcely ever ask them questions about the procedures and statements of historians, though in many cases they are students of history as well as of philosophy. If I can show that there are problems about history to which philosophers might well give their attention, I shall have accomplished my main purpose. Naturally, I shall be pleased if historians show interest in what I have to say; though if I am told that my questions are

largely, or even wholly, irrelevant to historical studies proper, I shall not count that as a major reproach. Philosophers are notoriously rash men, but I hope I shall not be thought to have the presumption to tell historians how to go about their own business.

It will be obvious how much I owe to Collingwood, though I have tried not to follow him wholly uncritically. I have also learnt a lot in discussion with Mr P. G. Lucas, of the University of Manchester, who read early drafts of four of my first five chapters, and whose comments drew my attention to some shocking simplicities of thought. He must not be blamed for those which remain. I should like to thank him and also Prof. Paton, who read the whole book in typescript and saved me, among other things, from a bad blunder in Chapter 6.

W.H.W.

December, 1950

I

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY?

§ I. *Current suspicion of the subject*

A writer on philosophy of history, in Great Britain at least, must begin by justifying the very existence of his subject. That this should be so may occasion some surprise; yet the facts are clear. No philosopher would dispute the assertion that there is a fairly well-defined group of problems which belong to the philosophy of the physical sciences, and which arise when we reflect on the methods and assumptions of those sciences, or again on the nature and conditions of scientific knowledge itself. Philosophy of science, in some sense, is agreed to be a legitimate undertaking. But no such agreement exists about philosophy of history.¹

It is perhaps worth asking how this situation has come about, since the enquiry may be expected to throw light on the subject-matter of the branch of study with which we propose to deal. Historical studies have flourished in Great Britain for two centuries and more; yet philosophy of history has been, until recent years, virtually non-existent. Why?

One reason is undoubtedly to be found in the general orientation of philosophical thought in Europe. Modern Western philosophy took its rise out of reflection on the extraordinary progress made

i. [This was written in 1949, and reference to the 'Note on books' at the end of this volume will show that much important work has been done on the subject since then. Even so, philosophy of history remains only marginally respectable in British universities.]

by mathematical physics in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and its connection with natural science has remained unbroken ever since. The equation of knowledge proper with knowledge gained by the methods of science was made by almost every major philosopher from the time of Descartes and Bacon to that of Kant. It is true that amongst these thinkers two schools can be sharply distinguished: those who stressed the mathematical aspect of mathematical physics, and those who pointed to its basis in observation and dependence on experiment as being the most important thing about it. But though divided in this way, the writers in question were united in holding that, metaphysics and theology apart, physics and mathematics were the sole repositories of genuine knowledge. Nor is it surprising that the classical philosophers at least took this view, seeing that these sciences really were (again except for metaphysics and theology) the only developed branches of learning at the time when they wrote.

That British philosophers have hitherto had little to say about history can thus be partly explained by the general character of the modern European philosophical tradition. That tradition has always tended to look to the natural sciences for material for its studies, and has formed its criteria of what to accept as known by reference to scientific models. History, expelled from the body of knowledge proper by Descartes in part I of the *Discourse*, is still regarded with suspicion by his successors today. And in any case, history as we know it today, as a developed branch of learning with its own methods and standards, is a comparatively new thing: indeed, it scarcely existed before the nineteenth century. But these considerations, valid as they are, cannot explain the whole position. For in other European countries philosophy of history has become an accredited branch of study. In Germany and in Italy, at least, the problems of historical knowledge have excited, and continue to excite, a lively interest; but there is strangely little awareness of them in Great Britain. How can this difference of attitude be accounted for?

The answer, I think, is to be found by referring to some predominant characteristics of the British mind and temper. There are Germans who profess to believe that philosophical aptitude is not among the gifts possessed by inhabitants of these islands, because they have shown little liking for metaphysical speculation of the

remoter kind. But to say this is to overlook the very distinguished contributions made by writers like Locke and Hume to *critical* philosophy, contributions which are at least as notable as those of the thinkers of any other country. It is in propounding and solving problems of philosophical analysis—problems which arise when we reflect on the nature and conditions of such activities as the attainment of knowledge in the sciences, or the doing of moral actions—that British thinkers have excelled. These problems have been well suited to the native genius, with its combination of caution and critical acumen. By contrast, metaphysics, understood as an attempt to devise some overall interpretation of experience or to explain all things in terms of a single all-embracing system, has found comparatively little favour here. Its distinguished proponents have been few, and in general it has been regarded with scepticism and distrust.

Once these facts are appreciated, the neglect of philosophy of history by British thinkers in the past becomes more intelligible. For philosophy of history, as traditionally conceived, was without doubt a metaphysical subject. We can see this by glancing briefly at its development.

The question who should get the credit for inventing philosophy of history is a disputed one: a case could be made out for giving it to the Italian philosopher Vico (1668-1744), though his work passed largely unnoticed in his own day, another for going much further back to the writings of St Augustine or even to some parts of the Old Testament. For practical purposes, however, we are justified in asserting that philosophy of history first attained recognition as a separate subject in the period which opened with the publication, in 1784, of the first part of Herder's *Ideas for a Philosophical History of Mankind* and closed soon after the appearance of Hegel's posthumous *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* in 1837. But the study as conceived in this period was very much a matter of metaphysical speculation. Its aim was to attain an understanding of the course of history as a whole; to show that, despite the many apparent anomalies and inconsequences it presented, history could be regarded as forming a unity embodying an overall plan, a plan which, if once we grasped it, would both illuminate the detailed course of events and enable us to view the historical process as, in a special sense, satisfactory to reason. And its exponents, in attempt-

ing to realise this aim, displayed the usual qualities of speculative metaphysicians: boldness of imagination, fertility of hypothesis, a zeal for unity which was not above doing violence to facts classified as 'merely' empirical. They professed to offer an insight into history more profound and valuable than anything which working historians could produce, an insight which, in the case of Hegel, by far the greatest of these writers, found its basis not in any direct study of historical evidence (though Hegel was not so cavalier about facts as he is sometimes made out to be), but in considerations which were purely philosophical. Philosophy of history, as practised by these writers, thus came to signify a speculative treatment of the whole course of history, a treatment in which it was hoped to lay bare the secret of history once and for all.

All this was anathema to the cautious British mind.¹ It savoured far too strongly of that philosophy of nature for which German metaphysicians of the period were already notorious. Philosophers of nature seemed, to unfriendly critics at least, to promise a short cut to the understanding of nature, a way of discovering facts without going through the tedious business of empirical enquiry. By their own admission their object was to achieve a 'speculative' treatment of natural processes; and speculation, in this context, was not easily distinguished from guesswork. In its worst examples their work was marked by a fantastic apriorism which discredited it utterly in the eyes of the sober. Philosophy of nature was thus regarded with deep distrust by British thinkers, who transferred their dislike of it to philosophy of history, which they took to be nothing more than an attempt to do in the sphere of history what philosophers of nature were attempting in their own province. In each case both project and results were thought to be absurd.

The bias thus engendered against philosophy of history has remained a permanent feature of British philosophy. It is most instructive in this connection to notice that the antipathy is by no means confined to a single school. It is not only empiricists who have neglected this branch of study. Towards the end of the nineteenth and in the opening years of the twentieth century Continental philosophers of an idealist turn of mind (Dilthey and Rickert in

i. There were, of course, some to whom these ways of thinking were congenial, as the cases of Coleridge and Carlyle show. But in general Romanticism has made a poor showing in British philosophy.

Germany, Croce in Italy, may be mentioned as examples) seized on history as affording a form of knowledge which could be regarded as concrete and individual in comparison with the abstract, general knowledge offered by the natural sciences, and built their systems round that fact or supposed fact. But there was no corresponding movement in British idealism. It is true that Bradley began his career by writing a penetrating essay entitled 'The Presuppositions of Critical History'; but there is nothing to show that he attached any special importance to history in the working out of his general metaphysical view. His colleague Bosanquet certainly had no doubts about the matter. 'History,' he said, 'is a hybrid form of experience, incapable of any considerable degree of "being or trueness".'¹ A genuine idealism must be founded on the facts of aesthetic or religious experience, or again on those of social life; it was to these spheres, and not to history, that we must look for the concrete understanding of which Continental writers spoke. And Bosanquet's opinion was generally shared by all British idealists before Collingwood. Even today history remains an object of suspicion to some members of this school, if only because of the tendency shown by those who concern themselves with it to say that, as the only valid form of knowledge, it must absorb philosophy itself.²

§ 2. *Critical and speculative philosophy of history*

Such being the general reaction of British philosophers to the subject we are proposing to treat, the question may well be asked why we should presume to differ from them. If philosophy of history is thus generally despised, why venture to revive it? Now one answer to this might be that philosophy of history in its traditional form did not come to an end on the death of Hegel. It was continued, though in a very different guise, by Marx, and has been practised again in our own day by such writers as Spengler and Toynbee. Philosophy of history, in fact, like other parts of metaphysics, appears to exercise a continuous fascination on human

1. *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, pp. 78-9.

2. This tendency to what is called *historicism* (which has no essential connection with philosophy of history) is well illustrated by the later work of Collingwood, who was himself influenced in forming it by Croce and Gentile. For the attitude to it of a contemporary idealist the reader should consult the introduction by Professor T. M. Knox to Collingwood's posthumous book *The Idea of History*.

beings despite the repeated cry of its opponents that it consists of a set of nonsense statements. And a defence of a further enquiry into the traditional problems of the subject might well be developed along those lines. In the present context, however, I do not wish to ground myself on arguments which some readers at least are bound to find unconvincing. I want instead to try to show that there is a sense in which philosophers of every school should allow that philosophy of history is the name of a genuine enquiry.

As a preliminary to this I must point out the simple and familiar fact that the word 'history' is itself ambiguous. It covers (i) the totality of past human actions, and (2) the narrative or account we construct of them now. This ambiguity is important because it opens up at once two possible fields for philosophy of history. That study might be concerned, as it was in its traditional form briefly described above, with the actual course of historical events. It might, on the other hand, occupy itself with the processes of historical thinking, the means by which history in the second sense is arrived at. And clearly its content will be very different according to which of the two we choose.

To see the relevance of this distinction for our present purposes we have only to turn our attention for a moment to the parallel case of the natural sciences. Here there are in fact two terms for the enquiries corresponding to those we are distinguishing, though they are not always used with strict accuracy. They are philosophy of nature and philosophy of science. The first is concerned to study the actual course of natural events, with a view to the construction of a cosmology or account of nature as a whole. The second has as its business reflection on the process of scientific thinking, examination of the basic concepts used by scientists, and matters of that sort. In the terminology of Professor Broad, the first is a speculative, the second a critical discipline. And it needs very little reflection to see that a philosopher who rejects the possibility of the first of these studies is not thereby committed to rejecting the second.

It may be, as some philosophers would maintain, that philosophy of nature (in the sense of a study of the course of natural events in some way supplementary to that carried out by natural scientists) is an illegitimate undertaking; that cosmologies are, in fact, either summaries of scientific results (in which case they had best be left to scientists to construct) or idle fantasies of the imagination. But

even if this is so, it does not follow that there is no such subject as philosophy of science. Even if the philosopher cannot add in any way to the sum of our knowledge of nature or to our understanding of natural processes, he may all the same have something useful to say about the character and presuppositions of scientific thinking, the proper analysis of scientific ideas and the relation of one branch of science to another, and his mastery of logical techniques may conceivably help to clear up practical difficulties in scientific work. He is scarcely likely to say anything of value on these subjects unless he has a fair acquaintance with the sort of things scientists do; but, all the same, the questions he is asking will not be scientific questions. They will belong not to the direct search for factual truth or understanding which is the object of scientific enquiry, but rather to the stage of reflection which ensues when we begin to consider the nature and implications of scientific activities themselves.

Now, as was said at the beginning, it would be generally agreed that philosophy of science is a perfectly genuine branch of study. Even the most anti-metaphysically minded philosopher would admit that. But in that case he ought also to admit the possibility of philosophy of history in one of its forms at least. For just as scientific thinking gives rise to two possible studies, one concerned with the activity itself, the other with its objects, so does historical thinking. 'Philosophy of history' is, in fact, the name of a double group of philosophical problems: it has both a speculative and an analytic part. And even those who reject the first of these may perfectly well (and indeed should) accept the second.

§ 3. *Critical philosophy of history*

What questions are, or ought to be, discussed by those who concern themselves with the two parts of our subject here distinguished? It seems to me that the problems of *critical* philosophy of history, if I may begin with that, fall into four main groups. It may help the reader if I try at this point to indicate briefly what these are.

(a) *History and other forms of knowledge.* The first group is made up of questions about the very nature of historical thinking. What sort of a thing is history and how does it relate to other studies? The point at issue here is the crucial one of whether historical knowledge is *sui generis*, or whether it can be shown to be identical in character

with some other form of knowledge—knowledge as pursued in the natural sciences, for instance, or again perceptual knowledge.

The view of history perhaps most commonly accepted makes it co-ordinate with perceptual knowledge. It holds that the essential task of the historian is to discover individual facts about the past, just as it is the essential task of perception to discover individual facts about the present. And just as the data of perception constitute the material on which the natural scientist works, so, it is argued, the data of the historian provide material for the social scientist, whose business it is to contribute to the all-important science of man. But this neat division of labour, which assigns to the historian the task of finding out what happened and to the social scientist that of explaining it, breaks down when we turn to actual examples of historical work. What immediately strikes us there is that historians are not content with the simple discovery of past facts: they aspire, at least, not only to say what happened, but also to show why it happened. History is not just a plain record of past events, but what I shall call later a 'significant' record—an account in which events are connected together. And the question immediately arises what their being connected implies about the nature of historical thinking.

Now one possible answer to this (it is sometimes taken as the only possible answer) is that the historian connects his facts in precisely the same way as the natural scientist connects his—by seeing them as exemplifications of general laws. According to this line of argument, historians have at their disposal a whole set of generalisations of the form 'situations of A-type give rise to situations of B-type', by means of which they hope to elucidate their facts. It is this belief which lies behind the theory of the nineteenth-century positivists that historical thinking is, in effect, a form of scientific thinking. What these authors stressed was that there are laws of history just as there are laws of nature; and they argued that historians ought to concentrate on making these laws explicit. But in actual fact historians have shown little or no interest in this programme, preferring instead to give their attention, as before, to the detailed course of individual events, yet claiming, all the same, to offer some explanation of it. And their doing so suggests the possibility at least that historical thinking is, after all, a form of thinking of its own, coordinate with and not reducible

to scientific thinking. We cannot assume that it is on the strength of one or two *prima facie* difficulties in the other theories mentioned: the autonomy of history, if it is autonomous, clearly has to be demonstrated on independent grounds. But that there is some case for the view is hard to deny.

(J>) *Truth and fact in history.* These questions about the status of historical thinking and its relation to other studies ought, I believe, to be regarded as genuine by philosophers of all schools. And the same can be said of the second group of problems belonging to critical philosophy of history, which centre round the conceptions of truth and fact in history. Here, as in the problem of historical objectivity which I shall discuss next, we have to do with questions which arise in theory of knowledge generally, but have certain special features when we consider them in relation to the sphere of history.

These features are obvious enough when we ask what is an historical fact, or again in virtue of what we can pronounce the statements of historians to be true or false. We are apt to suppose that the facts in any branch of learning must be in some way open to direct inspection, and that the statements of experts in each branch can be tested by their conformity with them. But whatever the virtues of this theory elsewhere, it cannot be applied with any plausibility to the field of history.

The most striking thing about history is that the facts it purports to describe are past facts; and past facts are no longer accessible to direct inspection. We cannot, in a word, test the accuracy of historical statements by simply seeing whether they correspond to a reality which is independently known. How then can we test them? The answer which any practising historian would give to this question would be that we do so by referring to historical evidence. Although the past is not accessible to direct inspection it has left ample traces of itself in the present, in the shape of documents, buildings, coins, institutions, procedures and so forth. And it is upon these that any self-respecting historian builds his reconstruction of it: every assertion the historian makes, he would say, must be supported by some sort of evidence, direct or indirect. So-called historical statements which rest on any other basis (for example, on the historian's unaided imagination) should be given

no credence. At their best they are inspired guesses; at their worst mere fiction.

This certainly gives us an intelligible working theory of historical truth, but not one which satisfies all philosophical scruples. We can see that if we reflect on the character of historical evidence itself. The traces of the past which are available in the present include, as I have already said, such things as documents, coins, procedures and so forth. But when we come to think about it, such things bear neither their meaning nor their authenticity on their face. Thus when an historian reads a statement in one or other of the 'original sources' for a period he is studying, he does not automatically accept it. His attitude to it, if he knows his job, is always critical: he has to *decide* whether or not to believe it, or again how much of it to believe. History proper, as Collingwood was never tired of pointing out, cannot be looked on as a scissors and paste affair: it is not made up by the historian's taking bits of wholly reliable information from either one or a whole series of 'authorities.' Historical facts have in every case to be established: they are never simply given. And this applies not merely to the finished products of the historian's thinking, but to the statements from which he starts as well; though, as we shall see later, this is not inconsistent with recognising that some of these statements are regarded by him as having a far higher degree of reliability than others.

We can sum this up by saying that it is the duty of the historian not only to base all his statements on the available evidence, but further to decide what evidence is available. Historical evidence, in other words, is not an ultimate datum to which we can refer to test the truth of historical judgments. But this, as will be obvious, reopens the whole question of fact and truth in history. With further attempts to deal with it—of which we may mention here the theory that *some* historical evidence (namely that provided by certain memory judgments) is, after all, irrefragable, and the opposing idealist contention that all history is contemporary history (i.e., that historical thinking is in reality concerned not with the past, but the present)—we cannot deal here. They will be the subject of discussion in a later chapter. But enough has perhaps been said to indicate that serious problems arise when we begin to reflect on these questions, and to make clear that they are a proper subject for philosophical enquiry.

(c) *Historical objectivity.* The third of our sets of questions concerns the notion of objectivity in history, a notion of which it is not too much to say that it cries out for critical scrutiny. The difficulties raised by this concept¹ can perhaps best be brought out by considering the two following not obviously compatible positions.

(i) On the one hand, every reputable historian acknowledges the need for some sort of objectivity and impartiality in his work: he distinguishes history from propaganda, and condemns those writers who allow their feelings and personal preconceptions to affect their reconstruction of the past as bad workmen who do not know their job. If the point were put to them, most historians could be got to agree that theirs was a primarily cognitive activity, concerned with an independent object, the past, whose nature they had to investigate for its own sake, though they would doubtless add that our knowledge of that object is always fragmentary and incomplete. Yet (ii) the fact remains that disagreements among historians are not only common but disturbingly stubborn, and that, once technical questions of precisely what conclusion can be drawn from this or that piece of evidence are regarded as settled, instead of an agreed interpretation of any period emerging, a plurality of different and apparently inconsistent readings of it is developed—Marxist and liberal, Catholic, Protestant and 'rationalist,' royalist and republican, and so on. These theories are held in such a way that their supporters think each of them to be, if not the final truth about the period under study, at any rate correct in essentials: a conviction which makes them repudiate all rival views as positively erroneous. And this can only suggest to a candid outside observer that the claim to scientific status often made for modern history at least is one which cannot be sustained, since historians have conspicuously failed to develop what may be called an historical 'consciousness in general,' a set of agreed canons of interpretation which all who work at the subject would be ready to acknowledge.

What are we to say about this situation? There seem to be three main ways in which we could try to deal with it.

First, we might attempt to maintain not only that historians are

1. Reference forjard to pp. 36-7 may be found useful for the understanding of what follows.

influenced by subjective factors, but that they must be. Impartial history, so far from being an ideal, is a downright impossibility. In support of this we could point out that every historian looks at the past from a certain point of view, which he can no more avoid than he can jump out of his own skin. We could also maintain that the disagreements of historians, when carefully analysed, seem to turn on points which are not matter for argument, but depend rather on the interests and desires of the contending parties, whether in a personal or in a group capacity. Historical disputes, according to this way of thinking, are at bottom concerned not with what is true or false, but with what is and what is not desirable, and fundamental historical judgments are in consequence not strictly cognitive but 'emotive.' This would go far to abolish the distinction between history and propaganda, and therefore to undermine the claim that history is (or can become) a truly scientific study.

Secondly, we might try to argue that the past failure of historians to reach objective truth is no evidence that it will always elude them, and attempt to show that the development of a common historical consciousness is not out of the question. In so doing we should be adopting the position of the nineteenth-century positivists from which the German philosopher Dilthey started (though Dilthey changed his mind about it later): that objective history ought to rest on an objective study of human nature. The difficulties of this project are clearly enormous, and the positivist view of it at least is altogether too simple; but it should not be rejected for that reason alone. It is clearly a point in its favour that, as we shall argue later, general judgments about human nature have an important part to play in historical interpretation and explanation.

Lastly, we could maintain that the concept of historical objectivity is radically different from that of scientific objectivity, the difference coming out in the fact that whilst all reputable historians condemn biased and tendentious work, they do not so clearly endorse the scientific ideal of wholly impersonal thinking. The work of the historian, like that of the artist, may be thought to be in some sense an expression of his personality, and it is plausible to argue that this is of vital account for the subject we are considering. For though it is fashionable to dismiss art as a wholly practical activity, the fact remains that we do often speak as if it

were in some sense cognitive too. The artist, we say, is not content only to have and express his emotions: he wants also to communicate what he takes to be a certain vision or insight into the nature of things, and would claim truth and objectivity for his work for that very reason. And it might be maintained that the best way of dealing with the problem of historical objectivity is to assimilate historical thinking in this respect to the thinking of the artist. History might then be said to give us a series of different but not incompatible portraits of the past, each reflecting it from a different point of view.

There are obvious difficulties in this as in the two preceding theories, but they cannot be discussed here. The most I can hope to have achieved in this short survey is to have shown that my original statement that the concept of objectivity in history cries out for critical scrutiny is only too patently true, and to have directed the reader's attention to some lines of thinking about it. With this I must leave the matter for the present, and pass on to the fourth and last of my groups of problems in critical philosophy of history.

(d) *Explanation in history.* The central problem in this group is that of the nature of historical explanation. The question here is whether there are any peculiarities about the way the historian explains (or attempts to explain) the events he studies. We have seen already that there is a case for saying that history is, typically, narrative of past actions arranged in such a way that we see not only what happened but also why. We must now ask what sort, or sorts, of 'why' are involved in history.

We can best approach this question by considering the way in which the concept of explanation is used in the natural sciences. It is a philosophical commonplace that scientists no longer attempt to explain the phenomena with which they deal in any ultimate sense: they do not propose to tell us why things are what they are to the extent of revealing the purpose behind nature. They are content with the far more modest task of building up a system of observed regularities in terms of which they hope to elucidate any situation which falls to be examined. Given any such situation, their procedure is to show that it exemplifies one or more general laws, which can themselves be seen to follow from, or connect with, other laws

of a wider character. The main features of this process are, first, that it consists in the resolution of particular events into cases of general laws, and secondly that it involves nothing more than an external view of the phenomena under consideration (since the scientist is not professing to reveal the purpose behind them). It can thus be said to result in an understanding which is properly described as 'abstract.' Now it has been claimed by many writers on philosophy of history that historical understanding is not thus abstract but is, in some sense, concrete. It is clear enough that the question whether there is anything in this contention depends on whether historians explain their facts in the same way as natural scientists explain theirs, or whether they can be shown to possess some peculiar insight into their subject-matter enabling them to grasp its individual nature.

There are some philosophers who have only to pose such a question to answer it in the negative. Explanation, they hold, is and can be of only one type, the type employed in scientific thinking. A process of explanation is essentially a process of deduction, and at the centre of it there is thus always something expressible in general terms. But to conclude on such grounds that there can be no special concept of explanation in history is the reverse of convincing. The right way of tackling the question, one would have supposed, would be to begin by examining the steps historians actually take when they set out to elucidate an historical event or set of events. And when we do that we are immediately struck by the fact that they do not seem to employ generalisations in the same way as scientists do. Ostensibly at least, historians do not attempt to illuminate particular situations by referring to other situations of the same type; their initial procedure at any rate is quite different. Thus when asked to explain a particular event—say, the British general strike in 1926—they will begin by tracing connections between that event and others with which it stands in inner relationship (in the case in question, certain previous events in the history of industrial relations in Great Britain). The underlying assumption here is that different historical events can be regarded as going together to constitute a single process, a whole of which they are all parts and in which they belong together in a specially intimate way. And the first aim of the historian, when he is asked to explain some event or other, is to see it as part of such

a process, to locate it in its context by mentioning other events with which it is bound up.

Now this process of 'colligation,' as we may call it (following the usage of the nineteenth-century logician Whewell), is certainly a peculiarity of historical thinking, and is consequently of great importance when we are studying the nature of historical explanation. But we should not try to make too much of it. Some writers on the subject seem to leap from the proposition that we can establish inner connections between certain historical events to the far more general assertion that history is wholly intelligible, and argue in consequence that it is therefore superior to the natural sciences. This is clearly a mistake. The truth would seem to be that though historical thinking does thus possess certain peculiarities of its own, it is not *toto caelo* different from scientific thinking. In particular, it is hard to deny that the historian, like the scientist, does make appeal to general propositions in the course of his study, though he does not make these explicit in the same way as the scientist does. History differs from the natural sciences in that it is not the aim of the historian to formulate a system of general laws; but this does not mean that no such laws are presupposed in historical thinking. In fact, as I hope to show in detail later, the historian does make constant use of generalisations, in particular generalisations about the different ways in which human beings react to different kinds of situation. History thus presupposes general propositions about human nature, and no account of historical thinking would be complete without proper appreciation of that fact.

So much by way of preliminary description of what seem to be the leading problems of critical philosophy of history. Our survey should have made clear both that there are a number of genuine difficulties in the subject, and that they are the sort of difficulty with which analytic philosophers traditionally deal (though they have not been considered at all carefully by philosophers in Great Britain until recently). The main trouble about them is perhaps that they seem to be particularly closely interrelated, so that in treating of one group—say, that which concerns historical objectivity—we find ourselves forced to raise questions which strictly belong to another—questions about the relations between history

and the sciences, for example, or again about historical explanation. But this difficulty, if acute in philosophy of history, is by no means confined to that subject; and we must do what we can to deal with it, remembering that our grouping of problems is not to be thought of as possessing any inherent value in itself, but is merely a methodological device designed to prevent our asking too many questions at once.

§ 4. *Speculative philosophy of history*

To turn now to the problems which belong to philosophy of history in its speculative or metaphysical part, we must admit from the first that there is much more disagreement about whether these are genuine problems or not. Some philosophers would say that the only topics with which philosophy of history should concern itself are analytic problems of the kind already described, and that all further enquiries (such as those pursued by writers like Hegel) are in fact futile. But it must be confessed that there is at any rate a strong tendency to raise questions about the course of history as well as about the nature of historical thinking.

We may distinguish two groups of such questions. The first includes all those metaphysical problems which, as has already been made clear, were dealt with in what I am calling traditional philosophy of history. The fundamental point with which these philosophers were concerned can be put if we say that they sought to discover the meaning and purpose of the whole historical process. History as presented by ordinary historians seemed to them to consist of little more than a succession of disconnected events, utterly without rhyme or reason. There was no attempt in 'empirical' history, as it was called, to go beyond actual happenings to the plan which lay behind them, no attempt to reveal the underlying plot of history. That there was such a plot they thought obvious, if history was not to be regarded as wholly irrational; and accordingly they set themselves to find it. The task of philosophy of history, they thought, was to write such an account of the detailed course of historical events that its 'true' significance and 'essential' rationality were brought out. As we have seen already, it is easy enough to criticise such a project; and in fact the programme was condemned both by working historians (who saw in it an attempt to take away their jobs) and by anti-metaphysical philosophers

(who thought it wholly incapable of realisation). But the fundamental problem it raises—the problem, to call it by a crude name, of the meaning of history—is one which clearly has a recurrent interest, and no survey of our present subject could neglect it altogether.

The second group of questions is perhaps not strictly philosophical at all, though, thanks to the vogue of Marxism, it is with it that the general public most commonly takes philosophy of history to be concerned. The Marxist philosophy of history, so-called, has more aspects than one: in so far as it attempts to show that the course of history is tending to the creation of a classless communist society, for example, it comes near to being a philosophy of history of the traditional kind. But its main purpose is to put forward a theory of historical interpretation and causation. If Marx is right, the main moving factors in history are all economic; and no interpretation of the detailed course of events which fails to recognise this has any value. Now it must be said from the first that the question what are the main moving factors in history do not appear to be philosophical. It is a question which can be answered only by a study of actual causal connections in history; and why a philosopher should be thought specially equipped to make such a study is not apparent. It could obviously be undertaken with far more profit by an intelligent working historian. Moreover, it should result in the formulation not of a self-evident truth, but of an empirical hypothesis, to be tested by its efficacy in throwing light on individual historical situations. In so far as this is true, the working out of a theory of historical interpretation seems to belong to history itself rather than to philosophy of history, just as the determination of what causal factors are of most importance in the material world belongs to the sciences and not to philosophy of Science.

There is, however, some excuse for regarding Marx's own views on these matters as having more than a touch of the philosophical about them. We can say that the Marxist theory of historical interpretation is philosophical in so far as it presents its main point not as a mere empirical hypothesis, but as something much more like an *a priori* truth. Marx, as we find if we look at his views carefully, does not appear to be claiming only that economic factors are or a *matter of fact* the most potent forces determining

the course of history; he seems to be holding further that, things being what they are, such factors are *and must be* the basic elements in every historical situation. We have only to reflect on the way in which Marxists use their thesis to see that they assign it a greater validity than would be warranted if they did regard it as an empirical hypothesis. What, in fact, they appear to be doing is advocating the principle of historical materialism as a necessary truth, such that no future experience could possibly confute it. And if this is really correct their procedure certainly deserves the attention of philosophers.

The implications of these remarks should not be misunderstood. I am not suggesting that the attempt, by Marxists and others, to propound general theories of historical interpretation is in any way improper. I should have thought on the contrary that it is something in which all concerned with the study of history must be interested. My point about it is that the task of working out such a theory belongs not to the philosopher but to the historian. Marx's contribution to the understanding of history, in fact, was not made to philosophy of history in the proper sense at all. But the Marxist theory is of interest to the philosopher because of the kind of importance Marx appears to attach to his main principle. The unrestricted validity assigned by Marxists to this principle is inconsistent with its being regarded as a mere empirical hypothesis (though not with its having been *suggested* by experience); and the question what justification there is for regarding it in that way certainly deserves close attention.

All these points will be discussed in detail at a later stage. The purpose of the present exposition is only to illustrate the kind of question with which philosophy of history deals or might be thought to deal. We may summarise by saying that if the philosopher can be said to have any specific concern with the course of history, it must be with that course as a whole, i.e., with the significance of the whole historical process. This second part of our study, in fact, must be either metaphysical or non-existent.¹ And doubtless to say that will create a prejudice against it in some readers. But it is not clear that such a prejudice is justified, either

i. This might be denied on the ground that it is part of the function of philosophy of history to elucidate such concepts as 'progress', 'historical event', 'historical period'. I am not sure myself that it is, but if it is, the matter obviously connects closely with the topics mentioned in § 3 above.

in general or in the specific case before us. To assume that it is without discussion would scarcely be justifiable.

§ 5. Plan of the book

The treatment of philosophy of history in the present volume will fall into two parts corresponding to those just distinguished. In the first and longer of these we shall be occupied primarily with the nature of historical thinking. We shall state, or attempt to state, the most prominent features of that sort of thinking, trying to discover those among them which mark it off from thinking of other kinds. We shall discuss its presuppositions and examine the epistemological character of its products. Our procedure here will be purely reflective: starting from the fact that people do think about historical questions, our aim will be to discover what precisely they are doing. By these means we shall be able to touch on all those questions which were said above to belong to critical philosophy of history. It is scarcely necessary to emphasise that, in an elementary work like this, it will not be possible to do more than indicate what are the main problems which arise and to discuss, more or less dogmatically, one or two of the most obvious solutions of them. But even that may have its uses in so neglected a subject as this.

The second part of our enquiry, concerned with the traditional problems of philosophy of history, will necessarily be even more sketchy. The most we shall be able to do here, in fact, is to examine briefly outline one or two celebrated attempts to construct philosophies of history of the metaphysical kind, and to draw from reflection on them some conclusions about the feasibility of the whole enterprise. By way of appendix to this part I propose to undertake a brief consideration of historical materialism, developing the points made about it in the present chapter. If any reader is dissatisfied with the brevity of this treatment I can only say I am sorry; but I must make it plain that, in my view, a final decision about the validity of the theory in question rests not with the philosopher but with the historian himself.

TRUTH AND FACT IN HISTORY

§ i. *Introductory*

We described history, early in Chapter 2, as a significant narrative of human actions and experiences in the past. We have done something to elucidate and defend the first two parts of this description, and must now turn to the third, asking in what sense the historian's claim to reconstruct the past is justified. This will involve us immediately in the problem of historical truth, and ultimately in that of historical objectivity; and these will accordingly form the subjects of our next two chapters. As we shall see, the two subjects are closely connected, and might, indeed, be regarded as different aspects of a single topic.

The problem of truth is not peculiar to history, or for that matter to any branch of learning. It is a general philosophical question to know to what extent any judgment, or proposition, or statement (choose what term you will), expresses the nature of reality or states fact. But we should be clear from the first what is being asked here. We are not concerned with the justification of particular statements of any kind—with how, for instance, we know it is true that Julius Caesar was murdered or that chimaeras are imaginary creatures. Questions of that sort have to be answered by recognised experts in the different subjects concerned, or by reference to particular experiences. The philosophical problem of truth arises on a different level. It is not doubts about the truth of particular judgments, but scepticism about whether human

beings can ever reach truth or state fact precisely, that the philosopher has to face. And it is with this form of scepticism, so far as it concerns the special case of historical judgments, that we shall be concerned in the present discussion. We have to enquire into certain general difficulties about the historian's ability to do what he says he is doing, namely, reconstructing the past, and this enquiry will involve us in a critical examination both of what it is to be an historical fact and of the nature of historical evidence.

It would only be candid to point out here that there are philosophers today who deny that there is a real problem of truth of the kind just stated. The only genuine questions about truth, they say, are those arising out of enquiries into the grounds of particular statements, and these must all be answered departmentally. Philosophical scepticism, for these writers, so far from being the indispensable prelude to clear and critical thinking it was once thought to be, is a profitless chase after a will-o'-the-wisp from which any sensible person would wish to be free.

Those convinced of the correctness of this point of view may well find that the discussions of the present chapter have a somewhat outmoded air, though they will not necessarily be wholly out of sympathy with their conclusions. Whether they are, in fact, unilluminating as well as (perhaps) unfashionable I must leave the reader to judge. I would only remark in advance that while the point of view in question has certainly proved helpful in clearing up obstinate problems in more than one philosophical field, it is by no means self-evident that all the traditional questions of philosophy can be satisfactorily dealt with by its methods; and that the problem of truth is one over which the issue is, in my view, still in doubt.

§ 2. *Truth as correspondence and truth as coherence*

It will be convenient to begin with a sketch of two of the most widely held philosophical theories of truth, and some remarks on their respective merits and demerits. We shall consider these theories first without special reference to the sphere of history, leaving the question of their applicability to that sphere for separate consideration.

The first theory is one to which we all subscribe in words at least. A statement, we say, is true if it corresponds to the facts;

and, conversely, if it corresponds to the facts it is true. Truth and correspondence with fact thus seem to be interchangeable terms, and the theory simply consists in stressing their equivalence. Truth, its supporters say, *means* correspondence with fact, so that no statement which does not so correspond can be true.

Thus stated the Correspondence theory, as it is called, will seem to the unsophisticated mind little more than a truism. But difficulties begin when we try to probe its apparently innocent formula. A statement is true, we are told, if it corresponds with fact; but what is fact? Here common language is ready with an answer. The facts in any sphere, we should normally say, are what they are independently of the enquirer into it; in some sense they exist whether or not anybody thinks about them. They are what we describe as 'hard', 'stubborn', or, again, as 'given'. Facts so understood are commonly contrasted with theories, which cannot as such lay claim to any of these dignified adjectives, but must be content to be at best 'well-grounded' or 'securely based.' The proper function of a theory is to 'explain', 'do justice to' or 'cover' the facts, which thus form for it an indispensable frame of reference.

The reader will experience no difficulty in thinking of suitable examples of situations to which this analysis clearly applies. Thus that I have such-and-such visual experiences is fact. An oculist may form a theory about my powers of vision, and that theory may be true or false. Whether it is depends on whether it 'covers' or 'does justice to' my experiences, which are not themselves true or false, but simply occur. If it is suggested that the theory can be true even if it fails to answer to my experiences, I shall have no hesitation in denouncing the suggestion as empty talk. The oculist's diagnosis, I shall say, must explain the facts from which it starts; it is no good if it ignores them.

The Correspondence theory of truth may thus be said to have the merit of itself corresponding with fact, at a certain level of sophistication at least. But its difficulties are by no means cleared up. No doubt it is possible—and indeed indispensable—to draw for practical purposes a distinction between what we consider to be 'hard' fact and what we think of as 'mere' theory; but the theoretical basis of the distinction is not so clear. Theories, we are all apt to suppose, are things which exist in people's heads, whilst facts are there whether we like them or not. Theories take the form

of judgments, or propositions asserted or denied, or, less technically, of spoken, written or implied statements; facts are the material about which statements are made or judgments formulated. But the question we have to face is how we are to get at these independent facts to which our theories must conform, and it is a question to which it is by no means easy to find an answer. For, when we come to think about it, our theories, which exist in the form of actual or possible statements, are themselves tested by referring to other statements. The oculist's account of the defects of my vision, for instance, has to conform to the statements I make in response to his questions. It is not the case that he can know the facts directly and frame his theory accordingly; he has to decide what the facts are by considering the answers I give.

Now it may be suggested that the plausibility of this argument depends solely on the peculiarity of the chosen example. No doubt it is true that an oculist cannot know the facts about my vision directly, because he cannot see with my eyes; but because facts are not always directly accessible, it does not follow that they are never so. Must I not at least be myself aware of the true facts of the case and know what I see and what I do not? The visual experiences which were equated above with the facts in our example are after all my experiences, and presumably everyone knows his own experiences directly.

Yet the position is even so not wholly clear. For, after all, when we say we test a theory by referring to experiences the phrase is used somewhat loosely. Experiences in themselves cannot be used to test theories; they have to be expressed, given conceptual form, raised to the level of judgment, before they can serve that purpose. But in this process of expression the actual experience from which we set out is inevitably transformed. It is transformed by being interpreted—by being brought into relation with previous experiences of the same kind and classified under general concepts. Only if an experience is so interpreted can it be described, and only if it is described, or at least consciously apprehended by the person who has it, can it be used to check a theory. An experience which was not described but merely enjoyed could not be known in the sense in which we require to know the facts to which our statements must correspond.

The implication of these remarks should not be misunderstood.

They are not meant to refute the proposition that there is a given or, as some philosophers prefer to call it, an 'immediate' element in knowledge. That there is, I should say, is obvious, and those writers who lay stress on this given element as the source of all factual truths are in the right. But we cannot proceed from that to equate the sphere of the given with the sphere of fact, and assume that the philosophical problem of truth is solved. For the difficulty remains of seizing the given as it is given, and this seems to be just what we cannot do. The precise feelings we enjoy, the individual perceptions we have, are transformed when we come to interpret them. Yet unless we do interpret them we cannot use them in elaborating the structure of knowledge.

It follows from this that the distinction between fact and theory on which supporters of the Correspondence theory rely is one which cannot be taken as absolute. The facts to which our theories are to be referred must themselves be given propositional form (or, if you like, take shape as actual or possible statements) if they are to fulfil that function. But this means that an account of truth in terms of correspondence with fact can at best be a partial one. The notion of fact must be further explored, and an alternative analysis of it must be given.

At this point we may conveniently pass to our second main theory, the Coherence theory of truth. Here an attempt is made to define truth as a relation not between statement and fact, but between one statement and another. A statement, it is maintained, is true if it can be shown to cohere, or fit in with, all other statements we are prepared to accept. No actual statement we make, it is argued, is made entirely in isolation: they all depend on certain presuppositions or conditions, and are made against a background of these. Again, every belief we have is bound up with other beliefs, in the sense that it is part or the whole of our ground for accepting them, or they part or the whole of our ground for accepting it. The separate bits of our knowledge, in fact, form part of a system and, however little we realise it, the whole system is implicit in the assertion of any part of it. And the central contention of the theory we are examining is that it is on the systematic character of our knowledge that we must focus attention if we are to give a satisfactory account of truth.

Before making any comment on the theory, it will be well to

try to illustrate it in an example. Let us take the assertion that tomorrow will be wet and stormy, and consider how it would be treated by supporters of the Coherence theory. In the first place, they would point out that the assertion involves acceptance of a whole range of concepts and principles which are not peculiar to it, but which govern all statements and beliefs of the same kind: the concepts and principles which are set out in systematic form in the science of meteorology. And secondly, they would argue that the belief is not one which we form in isolation: we come to the conclusion that tomorrow will be wet and stormy because we have already committed ourselves to certain other assertions, such as that there is high cirrus cloud in the sky, that the sunset today has a certain appearance, and so on. Accordingly¹ it is said that we cannot discuss the truth of the judgment from which we set out as if it were complete in itself, but must consider it as part of a whole system of judgments. Like an iceberg, the system is only partly visible, but it is none the less indubitably there.

It should be noticed that the Coherence theory does not dispense with the notion of fact, but offers a fresh interpretation of it. A fact for it is not something which exists whether or not anybody takes any notice of it; it is rather the conclusion of a process of thinking. Facts cannot, as was imagined in the Correspondence account, be simply apprehended: they have to be *established*. And this means that there is really no distinction of principle between a fact and a theory. A fact is simply a theory which has established itself, a theory about whose reliability serious doubts no longer exist. The support of common language, it may be remarked, can be claimed for this usage: it is sometimes said of evolution, for instance, that it is no longer a theory, but fact.

It is true that acceptance of this interpretation involves us in the at first sight paradoxical assertion that the facts in any subject are only provisionally fixed, and are everywhere liable to be revised; but, provided we take care not to confuse this with the very different view that all beliefs are equally doubtful, there is no reason why we should not agree to it. The whole history of science, after all, goes to show that what is considered fact in one age is repudiated in another, and indeed it is hard to see how the different branches of learning could have made the progress they have if the matter were different. The alternative notion of scientific advance, formulated

by Aristotle, who thought the edifice of knowledge would take final form from the first and would merely grow in bulk without alteration in structure, is now everywhere discredited.

So much by way of summary account of the theory. Of the many objections brought against it, it may be said at once that some spring from what might well be thought the extravagances of its supporters. Thus they tried to make out that the theory applied to all possible judgments or statements, and this involved difficulties both about mathematical and logical truths (which do not appear to be subject to revision in the same way as factual truths), and, still more obviously, about their own statement of the theory. If no statement can be pronounced finally true, what are we to say of the statement that truth is coherence? Again, in the interest of the monistic metaphysics they favoured, they argued that all truths formed part of a single system, which must accordingly be presupposed in all correct assertions. This had the appearance at least of suggesting that every fact must have direct bearing on every other fact—that, for instance, the weather in Australia today must have a bearing on what I eat for my tea in Oxford—when ordinary experience would suggest that it is utterly irrelevant. But it seems possible to accept the theory as giving a correct account of factual truths without committing ourselves to any such absurdities. Whatever view we take of the truth of mathematical and philosophical propositions, truths of fact may still be correctly explained by the Coherence theory. Nor is the contention that no judgment can be true in isolation, but all must be taken as falling within a system, overthrown by doubts about whether we can find a *single* system within which they all fall. The Coherence theory can be substantially correct, even if it cannot be used to support a monistic metaphysics.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the theory does wear an air of paradox. If it merely argued that coherence is to be taken as the *test* of truth it might be acceptable enough, for it is, in fact, the case that our various beliefs do fall into recognisable systems; but in *identifying* truth with coherence it appears to involve a fatal omission. What it omits is any reference to the element of independence which we associate with truth. We all believe that there is a distinction between truth, which holds whether we like it or not, and fiction, which we make up to suit ourselves. But if facts are to

be pronounced the products of our thinking it looks as if we ought to be able to make them up too, and thus the distinction is blurred. Of course, supporters of the Coherence theory are perfectly aware of this objection, and are anxious to repudiate it. The thinking which leads to the establishment of fact, they say,¹ must not be supposed arbitrary: truth is attained only so far as I suppress my private self and allow my thinking to be guided by objective principles, universally valid. But the impression remains that the given element in experience is not satisfactorily accounted for by the theory, and that the 'hardness' of fact, a feature we all recognise in our unphilosophical moments, disappears if it is accepted.

We may sum up by saying that, whilst each of these standard theories of truth has its attractive features, neither is wholly free from difficulties. A fully (or more) satisfactory account would, it seems, have to embody points drawn from both. But instead of asking here whether any genuine synthesis of the two theories is possible, we must turn back to the special problem which concerns us in this chapter, and consider the nature of truth and fact in history.

§ 3. *History and the Correspondence theory*

The support of history has been claimed for both of the theories we have analysed, in each case with some plausibility.

Thus it is pointed out by supporters of the Correspondence view² that in history, if anywhere, we are concerned with facts which are fixed and determined just because they are past, facts which cannot by any stretch of imagination be thought to depend on what we are thinking now. History in the sense of the record of past events must correspond to history in the sense of *res gestae*; if it does not we shall have no hesitation in denouncing it as a fraud. Scientific truths can perhaps be accommodated to the requirements of the Coherence theory, because of the element of convention which scientific thinking undoubtedly includes; but historical truths cannot, for the facts with which history deals have actually occurred,

1. See, for instance, part III of H. H. Joachim's *Logical Studies*. Joachim's earlier book, *The Nature of Truth*, is perhaps the clearest exposition of the Coherence theory in English. The theory goes back to Hegel, who produced the well-known dictum that 'the truth is the whole'.

2. cf. A. M. MacLver, 'Historical Explanation,' reprinted in *Logic and Language*, second series, Ed. A. Flew, for some of these arguments.

and nothing we say or think about them now is going to alter them.

All this is convincing enough, yet there is a strong case on the other side too. The point on which the Coherence theory is chiefly insistent, that all truths are relative, is illustrated with particular clarity in the field of history. It can be argued with some effect that although the historian thinks he is talking about a past which is over and done with, everything he actually believes about that past is a function of the evidence at present available to him and of his own skill in interpreting it. The facts he recognises—which after all are the only facts he knows—are established in the way described in the Coherence theory; they do represent conclusions arrived at after processes of thinking, conclusions which incidentally are so far systematically related that an alteration in one can have a profound effect on all the rest. And if it is suggested that this cannot be all that the historian means when he speaks of fact, that he is thinking of the actual past and not merely our present reconstruction of it, of what, in fact, happened rather than of what we believe about it now, the reply will come that this something further can be shown to be in the last analysis chimerical. For facts which bear no relation to present evidence must be unknowable, and how they could have any significance in those circumstances, whether for historians or anyone else, is not apparent.¹

It is clear enough that the real point at issue between the theories turns on the accessibility of the past to later knowledge. The Correspondence theory stakes everything on the notion of a past which is at once over and done with and capable of being reconstructed in some degree at least. Supporters of the Coherence view, by way of contrast, say that the two requirements cannot both be fulfilled, and argue that we must choose between a past which is independent and one which can be known.

Let us try to advance towards a solution by examining the Correspondence account in some detail. It can be put forward with varying degrees of sophistication. In all its forms it may be said to liken the historian's task to the construction of a mosaic. The past, it argues, consisted of a series of separate events, and it is the historian's job to reconstruct the series, or a part of it, as fully as he

i. A good statement of the Coherence theory as applied to history is to be found in Michael Oakeshott's *Experience and its Modes*, ch. III.

can. If now it is asked how the job is done, the simplest answer is that some events were recorded as they occurred, and that all we have to do is read the records. Ancient historians who wrote of contemporary events, like Thucydides and Caesar, military and civil governors setting up tablets to commemorate their deeds, medieval chroniclers and modern diarists may be mentioned as instances of persons who recorded events as they actually happened (or perhaps a little later), and whose records can accordingly be taken as providing a basis of hard fact round which the historian can build the rest of his narrative. Historical truth, on this account, depends on our accepting certain primary authorities, at least some of whose statements are treated as wholly authentic.

I That this notion of authorities has an important part to play in historical thinking I should not wish to deny. Yet to suggest that any historian who knows his job would be ready to accept a statement as true just because it is recorded by such an authority is surely absurd. No doubt there are occasions on which our only evidence for a past event is a record of that sort; but that illustrates not the extent of the historian's trust in primary sources, but rather the poverty of the material with which he works. The simple consideration that our confidence in even the best authorities is increased by the discovery of independent evidence for what they say is enough to expose the hollowness of the authority theory. And the truth is that it belongs to a stage of historical thinking which is now outmoded. Dependence on the *ipse dixit* of an authority seemed natural enough in the early days of historiography, or again in those ages when appeal to authority was normal in every sphere. But whatever part faith may have to play elsewhere, it is entirely out of place in developed historical thinking. A modern historian's attitude to his authorities must be everywhere critical: he must submit all his evidence, with whatever authority it comes, to the same sceptical scrutiny, building his facts out of it rather than taking it for fact without further ado.

Appeal to authority will thus not serve as a ground for a correspondence theory of historical truth. But the last sentence of the preceding paragraph may suggest an alternative account. Every working historian, it can be argued, draws a distinction between the conclusions to which he comes, the picture of the past he finally builds up, and the material from which he sets out, which exists in

the shape of historical evidence—documents, coins, remains of buildings, and so on. He may regard his conclusions as provisional only, but he cannot take up the same attitude towards his evidence. Unless this is taken as firm and beyond doubt, as an ultimate which is not to be questioned, there can be no progress on the road to historical truth.

Here again we are dealing with a theory which corresponds closely to common-sense ideas and for that very reason undoubtedly contains much that is attractive. Yet it owes some of its attraction to an important ambiguity. When we say that every historian believes that there is evidence for the past, and that this evidence is something he will not presume to doubt, what do we mean? If it is only that there exist now certain documents, buildings, coins, etc., which are believed to date from this period or that, the statement is not likely to be questioned. It is no part of the historian's task to doubt the evidence of his senses: he takes that for granted just as natural scientists do. But the case is altered if we understand the statement in a different (and perfectly natural) sense. If it is taken to mean that there is a fixed body of historical evidence, whose implications are plain for all to see, serious doubts arise about it. They do so in the first place because of the consideration, obvious enough to anyone with first-hand experience of historical work, that historians must not only decide to what conclusions their evidence points, but further what they are to recognise as evidence. In a sense, of course, everything in the physical world now is evidence for the past, and much of it for the human past. But it is not all equally evidence for any given series of past events, and it sets the historian a problem just because of that. The problem is that of excluding bogus and admitting only genuine evidence for the events under review, and it is a most important part of historical work that it should be properly solved.

And there is another point which needs to be emphasised. The suggestion that there is evidence for the past is easily confused with the different suggestion that there are propositions about the past which we can affirm with certainty, and the confusion is particularly important if we are discussing the merits of the Correspondence theory. For supporters of that theory, as we have seen, must, if they are to make out their case, point to some body of knowledge (in the strict sense of that term in which what we know is beyond

question) by which to test our beliefs, and their recourse to historical evidence in the case we are examining was undertaken precisely with that purpose in mind. But it should not be very difficult to see that to read them in that way and make them say that historical evidence gives us so much knowledge about the past is in effect to revive the authority theory. The only difference is that instead of pinning our faith to written texts we now base ourselves on historical evidence generally, including archaeological and numismatic as well as literary and epigraphic data. But the procedure is no more plausible in the one case than in the other, for it remains true that evidence of all kinds needs interpretation, and the very fact that it does means that no statement about the past can be true in isolation.

The truth is, I think, that we can believe that there is good evidence for the past without believing that *any* propositions about it are beyond question. If the Correspondence theory were to assert that and nothing more, then we should have no cause to quarrel with it. But it is seldom formulated, and perhaps cannot be satisfactorily formulated, in that very modest way. The normal procedure of those who identify truth with correspondence, in the sphere of history as in that of perception, is to look for basic statements of fact which cannot be questioned, fundamental propositions which we can be said to know beyond possibility of correction. But the search is no more successful in history than it is elsewhere. The basic propositions to which we point—'here is a coin struck by Vespasian', 'this is a college account book dated 1752', might be examples—all embody an element of interpretation as well as something given. So-called 'atomic' propositions, which 'picture' fact precisely, are simply not to be found, in the sphere of history at least.

It may be objected to this that it ignores the special case, all-important for the historian, of memory knowledge. It has been argued, indeed,¹ that the historical past cannot be identified with the remembered past, and this would seem to be clear enough from the consideration that we hope as historians to go far beyond the range of living memory in our reconstruction of past events. Memory knowledge is by no means always, or perhaps even often, among the explicit data from which historians argue. But this does not alter the fact that historical thinking depends on memory in a

1. cf. Oakeshott, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

quite special way. If there were no such thing as memory, it is doubtful if the notion of the past would make sense for us at all. And the argument we have to face here is just that memory, sometimes at least, gives us direct contact with the past, enabling us to make statements about it which are in principle beyond doubt. Memory, it is said, must be a form of knowledge in the strict sense: the very fact that we condemn some memories as unreliable shows as much. Part of the evidence for the judgment that memory is liable to mislead consists of memories of occasions on which we have ourselves been misled by it, and unless these memories are treated as authentic the wider judgment could never be made.

It is scarcely possible in the present context to discuss the problem of memory in the detail which it deserves, or even to indicate the reservations with which the above theory must be put forward. All we can do is make a single general point about it, a point which, however, seems fatal to the objection we are considering. It is that it is impossible to separate the pure deliverances of memory from the constructions we ourselves put upon them. When we say we remember something now, does our memory give us an exact and unaltered picture of an event which happened in the past? No doubt we often think it does, and no doubt our assumption is a valid one for practical purposes. But when we reflect that we are forced to look at the past through the eyes of the present and accommodate what we see to the conceptual scheme we use now, our confidence is shaken, and we begin to realise that what may be called pure memory, in which we deal only with what is given in experience, and memory judgment, in which we seek to interpret the given, are stages distinguishable in principle but not in practice. And once we recognise this we find the claim that some memory statements are pure transcriptions of fact very difficult to sustain.

The case of memory, here again, appears to be precisely parallel to that of sense-perception. Supporters of the Correspondence theory of truth have often tried to argue that sense-perception gives us direct knowledge of the real world, and is as such a source of incorrigible truths of fact. But the argument breaks down once we draw the important distinction between sensation and sense-perception proper. Sensation, no doubt, gives us immediate contact with the real, but it is to sense-perception that we must advance if we are to say anything about the experience, and the judgments

of sense-perception in the strict sense are certainly not incorrigible. Similarly with memory knowledge. Pure memory, as I have called it, gives us immediate access to the past, but it does not follow that we grasp the past precisely as it was in memory, knowing it as it were by a species of pure intuition. The truth would seem rather to be that we have a basis on which to reconstruct it, but no means of looking at it face to face.

§ 4. *History and the Coherence theory*

The reader will observe that throughout this discussion of the Correspondence theory as applied to history we have made use of criticisms drawn from the stock-in-trade of its rival. And he may well be curious to know whether this means that we ourselves accept the Coherence theory as correct in this sphere, and if so how we propose to deal with the paradoxes it seems to involve.

I am not anxious to undertake a further extensive survey and critique, more especially as the outlines of a Coherence view of historical truth have been suggested in the foregoing pages, and shall ask leave to consider only one or two of the more pressing difficulties in such a view.

We may put the argument against a Coherence theory of truth in history on some such lines as the following. According to the Coherence theory, as we saw, all truth is essentially relative: it depends, in the first place, upon the presuppositions and conceptual scheme with which we set out, in the second on the rest of our beliefs in the field in question. But, we shall be told, this theory, if honestly applied, would effectively prevent our ever building up a body of historical truth. Unless he can affirm that there are some facts which he knows for certain, there is nothing for the historian to build on. All knowledge must begin from a basis which is taken as unquestioned, and all factual knowledge from a basis in fact. The alternative, the relativism of the Coherence theory, leaves the whole structure in the air, with the result that we have no effective criterion for distinguishing between the real and the imaginary. Coherence, in short, is not enough as an account of historical truth: we need to be assured of contact with reality as well. And it may be added that a glance at actual historical procedure bears these contentions out. For historians do certainly recognise some facts as established beyond question—that Queen Victoria came to die

throne in 1837 and died in 1901, for instance—and it is on the basis of these that they build up their whole account.

There are two main points in this criticism, one of which appears to the present writer very much more effective than the other. The first is the simple assertion that the historian does regard some of his facts as certain and that this cannot be reconciled with the Coherence theory. But why should it not? What the Coherence theory maintains, in effect, is that all historical judgments are, strictly speaking, probable only every one is in principle subject to revision as knowledge accumulates. But it is perfectly possible to take up this position without assigning the *same* degree of probability to every historical statement. Supporters of the Coherence theory of historical truth are not precluded from accepting some judgments as better established, even incomparably better established, than others: like the rest of us, they can be very confident about one, fairly well convinced of a second, and highly doubtful of a third. The one thing they cannot say is that any judgment is so secure that it cannot be shaken even in principle. But no one who knows anything about the actual course of historical thought would want them to make such a claim.

This may seem a paradox, yet the position is, I think, really quite clear. It can be illustrated by comparing the historian's procedure with that of the detective, a favourite analogy of Collingwood's which is very much to the point here. A detective investigating a case begins by deciding what he can regard as undisputed fact, in order to build his theories around that as a framework. If the theories work out, the framework will be declared to have been well-founded, and no further questions will be asked about it. But if results are not forthcoming, a stage may be reached at which it is necessary to go back to the beginning and doubt some of the initial 'facts' of the case. A detective who, through devotion to the Correspondence theory of truth, refused to take that step would be of very little use in his profession, though naturally he would not be encouraged to take it till every other expedient failed. The case of the historian is exactly parallel. He also must be prepared, if necessary, to doubt even his firmest beliefs—even, for example, the chronological framework inside which he arranges his results¹—though it does not follow that he will involve himself in such an

1. As has, in fact, been done more than once for the history of ancient Egypt.

upheaval lightly. He will indeed do all he can to avoid it, undertaking it only as a last resort, but all the same he must not rule it out in principle.

The point about our confidence in the certainty of some historical facts is thus not fatal to the Coherence theory, since it is practical, not mathematical, certainty which is there in question. As Hume saw, we do distinguish in the sphere of matter of fact between what we consider to be 'proved' and what we regard as 'merely' probable. But the distinction, as he might have added, is in the end a relative one, since the contrary of every matter-of-fact statement, even one about which we are supremely confident, is always logically possible. No such statement, whether in history or elsewhere, can be raised just to the status of a logically necessary truth.

The other main charge in the criticism of the Coherence theory of historical truth outlined above is, however, a different matter. It is that an account of historical truth in terms of coherence only leaves the whole structure of historical beliefs in the air, without any necessary connection with reality. Not unnaturally this position is readily identified with one of complete scepticism about historical knowledge, and we must clearly examine it with some care.

Let us investigate the charge by considering the account of truth and fact in history given by a well-known supporter of the Coherence theory who has also been a professional historian, Professor Michael Oakeshott. In his book, *Experience and its Modes*,¹ Professor Oakeshott agrees that the historian 'is accustomed to think of the past as a complete and virgin world stretching out behind the present, fixed, finished and independent, awaiting only discovery' (p. 106). 'It is difficult,' he adds (p. 107), 'to see how he could go on did he not believe his task to be the resurrection of what once had been alive.' But for all that the belief is an absurdity.

A fixed and finished past, a past divorced from and uninfluenced by the present, is a past divorced from evidence (for evidence is always present) and is consequently nothing and unknowable. The fact is... that the past in history varies with the present, rests upon the present, is the present. 'What really happened*... must, if history is to be rescued from nonentity, be replaced by 'what the evidence obliges us to believe.' . » . There are

1. Originally published in 1933 and reissued in 1967. cf. also p. 192 below.

not two worlds—the world of past happenings and the world of our present knowledge of those past events—there is only one world, and it is a world of present experience.*

Indeed, it is because the historian in the end refuses to recognise the full implications of this statement—because he obstinately clings to the notion of an independent past and retains an element of correspondence in his working theory of truth—that Professor Oakeshott finally condemns historical thinking as not fully rational, but a 'mode' or 'arrest' of experience only.

Here we have the main paradox of the Coherence theory of historical truth set forth in all its nakedness. It is the paradox expressed in the well-known dictum of Croce's, that all history is contemporary history, and I suggest that it is one which no working historian can be got to accept. Professor Oakeshott, it should be remarked, is himself aware of this: he distinguishes, in the passage from which I have quoted, between the past as it is *in* history and the past as it is *for* history, the former being the past as viewed by the historian, the latter the past as philosophically interpreted. Having the courage of his convictions, he proceeds to set the past *for* history aside, saying that the common notion of it is a simple misconception of the character of the past *for in* history.

But it may be questioned, in the first place, whether this apparently high-handed procedure, which tells the historian that his beliefs are nonsense because they will not fit the results of a previously formulated philosophical position, is a sound one. And even if it can be defended (and some philosophers would certainly regard it as defensible), there appears to be a fatal ambiguity in Oakeshott's argument.²

When it is said that our knowledge of the past must rest on evidence which is present that is one thing; but when the conclusion is drawn that the past *is* the present, that is quite another. Evidence for the past must no doubt be present in the sense of being presented to us now, but it does not follow from this that it must *refer to* present time, as it would have to if Oakeshott's conclusion were to be justified. And indeed it is a characteristic of the evidence which historians deal with that it refers not to the present, but the

1. *op cit.*, pp. 107–8.

2. Compare G. C. Field, *Some Problems of the Philosophy of History* (British Academy lecture, 1938), pp. 15–16.

past. It is rooted in the past just because of the close connection between history and memory we noted above. As we saw, memory cannot be said to make us directly acquainted with past fact, but it does for all that give us access to the past. Reference to the past, involving the assertion of the proposition 'something happened', is an essential part of remembering, just as reference to an external world, involving the assertion of the proposition 'there are external objects or events', is an essential part of perception. Different philosophers have very different analyses to offer of these propositions; but the one thing which would not seem to be open to them is to explain them away altogether.

We may conclude that the Coherence theory, at least in its normal form, will not apply to history. But as we have previously criticised various attempts to state a Correspondence theory of historical truth, we must clearly ask where we stand. The answer, I suggest, is that we have been attempting a synthesis of the two views. Whilst denying the proposition that historians know any absolutely certain facts about the past and arguing with the Coherence party that all historical statements are relative, we nevertheless agree with supporters of the Correspondence view in asserting that there is an attempt in history, as in perception, to characterise an independent reality. And we should maintain that the assertion is not gratuitous because historical judgment, whatever its superstructure, has its foundation in a peculiar sort of experience, a kind of experience in which we have access to the past though no direct vision of it. There is in fact a given element in historical thinking, even though that element cannot be isolated. We cannot carry out the full programme of the Correspondence theory because we cannot examine the past to see what it was like; but our reconstruction of it is not therefore arbitrary. Historical thinking is controlled by the need to do justice to the evidence, and while that is not fixed in the way some would have us believe, it is none the less not made up by the historian. There is something 'hard' about it, something which cannot be argued away, but must simply be accepted. And it is doubtless this element which leads supporters of the Correspondence theory to try to find the criterion of historical truth in the conformity of statements to independently known facts. The project is one which is bound to fail, yet there remains a standing temptation to make it.

§ 5. *Criticisms of the intermediate position*

Our attempted synthesis will doubtless come under attack from both sides: we may expect to be told on the one hand that it depends on nothing more than unproved assertion, on the other that it offers too flimsy a barrier to the inroads of historical scepticism. To the first criticism we might reply that if we are making an assumption it is one which all historians, and for that matter all sensible persons, share. In any case, what more can be offered? Are we required to *prove* that there were past events? Some critics may suggest that we are if our account is to be fully defensible, but we may well wonder whether they have not got themselves into a state where they cannot be satisfied. Our experience is such that we classify events as past, present or future, just as it is such that we classify them as happening in the external world or in ourselves, and we can no more be expected to prove that there were past events than that we experience an external world. Memory is our sole guarantee of the one just as our possession of external senses is our sole guarantee of the other. This does not mean that philosophical attempts to *analyse* such notions as those of the past and the external world are, as some modern philosophers suggest, futile; on the contrary, such analyses can be genuinely illuminating. But it does mean that any effort to deduce them, by finding for them a logically necessary foundation, must end in failure.

To the second criticism that we offer too feeble a defence against historical scepticism we can retort only by reiterating our previous arguments against those theories which try to put forward something more substantial. In the course of the present chapter we have examined several attempts to find for the historian a set of unshakable facts to serve as a basis for his knowledge, but in every case we found the account open to criticism. Of other theories which proceed on the same general lines, we may mention the views of Dilthey and Collingwood, discussed in Chapter 3. But we saw (p. 51) above that Dilthey's account did not avoid the general difficulties of a representative theory of knowledge, whilst Collingwood's, though expressly designed to do just that, was able to achieve its object only by making use of a most questionable expedient. It may be useful to try to show what this was.

In a very difficult section in his *Idea of History* (part V, section 4,

pp. 282 ff.) Collingwood argued that there was a sense in which a past act of thinking, whether my own or someone's else, could be revived by me now, though not with precisely the same background as it originally had. He based his case on the consideration that acts of thought are not mere constituents of the temporal flow of consciousness, but things which can be sustained over a stretch of time and revived after an interval. A proposition of Euclid, for instance, can be contemplated by me for several seconds together, or again can be brought before my mind after my attention has wandered from it, and if I ask how many acts of thinking are involved in the one case or the other, the proper answer, Collingwood held, for each is one only. But if this holds of my own acts of thinking, it should hold also of cases where I am dealing with other people's thoughts: those of Julius Caesar, for instance. Here too the same act of thinking is in principle capable of being revived, though the background of feeling and emotion against which it was originally thought is not. And because this is so knowledge of the past is a real possibility: there is something about the past, namely certain past acts of thinking, which we can really grasp, though the process of doing so is one whose difficulties Collingwood had no wish to write down.

The argument, as always with Collingwood, is marked by great ingenuity. But an objection to it readily occurs: that the required identity is to be found in the *content* of what is thought rather than in the *act* of thinking itself. If this is right, I may think the same thought, in the sense of the same thought-content, as Julius Caesar, but not revive his precise act of thinking. The objection was anticipated by Collingwood (*op. cit.*, p. 288) and rejected on the ground that if I could only think the same thought-content as Caesar and not revive his act of thinking, I could never know that my thoughts were identical with his. But there appear to be important ambiguities in this position. In one sense of the word 'thought', that in which it is taken to mean act or process of thinking, my thoughts can never be identical with anyone else's: saying they are mine indicates as much. Yet in another sense, where 'thought' is equated with what a man thinks, two persons can certainly think the same thoughts, and, what is more, can know that they do. But they know it not because their acts of thinking are identical (how could they be?), but because they find they can

understand each other. Misled like so many others by the fatal word 'know', Collingwood has put forward an impossible solution for a difficulty which is perhaps not real at all.

It looks from this as if we must try to find a basis for historical knowledge not in our possession of a number of hard-and-fast past facts, but, more vaguely, in the given element in historical evidence. As I have tried to show, memory gives us access to the past, but not a direct vision of it. Thus all we can claim is to have a point of contact with past events, enabling us perhaps to divine their true shape in some degree, but not such that we can check our reconstructions by comparing them with it to see how far they are correct. For the rest, the sole criterion of truth available to us, in history as in other branches of factual knowledge, is the internal coherence of the beliefs we erect on that foundation.

5

CAN HISTORY BE OBJECTIVE ?

§ I. Importance of the notion of objectivity in history

Despite the length of the foregoing discussions, we cannot claim to have done more than scratch the surface of the problem of historical truth. For though we have argued (or perhaps only asserted) that truth about the past is in principle attainable by the historian, we have so far said nothing of the many difficulties which might be expected to prevent his attaining it in practice. To discuss these difficulties we must pass on to what seems to the present writer at once the most important and the most baffling topic in critical philosophy of history, the problem of historical objectivity.

It may perhaps be helpful if I try to show why I think this problem is of central importance for philosophy of history. To do so will involve a somewhat devious approach and, I fear, a good deal of repetition of what has already been said. But perhaps that will be pardoned if it serves to make a crucial point clear.

Our main concern in the preceding chapters of this book has been to examine the nature of historical thinking and determine the status of history *vis-à-vis* other branches of learning and types of human activity; in particular we have been occupied with the question of its relations to the natural sciences. The problem is forced on us from two sides at once. On the one hand we have the claims made by positivistically-minded philosophers that these sciences are the sole repositories of human knowledge, a claim which, if accepted, would make history something other than a

behave. He needs to get straight not merely his factual knowledge, but also his moral and metaphysical ideas. This important addition was not appreciated by the positivist school.

There are many philosophers today who would say that a programme for providing a standard set of moral and metaphysical ideas is not merely one of extreme difficulty; it is simply impossible of attainment. Our moral and metaphysical ideas (they maintain) spring from non-rational attitudes, and to ask which set of them it is 'rational' to hold is to ask a question which cannot be answered. To this scepticism about moral and metaphysical truth I should not wish to commit myself. I have argued elsewhere¹ that metaphysical disputes may be soluble in principle if not in practice, and I should not be prepared to rule out the possibility of general agreement on moral principles too, about which subject I doubt whether the last word has been said. But even if a solution of these difficult problems can be declared to be not wholly impossible, the achieving of it is clearly not going to be accomplished in the immediate future. Yet until it is accomplished an objective historical consciousness, whose principles would provide a framework for rational thought in history, must remain no more than a pious aspiration. And if it cannot be accomplished we have no alternative but to fall back on the perspective theory discussed above.²

1. *Reason and Experience*, ch. X.

2. [The argument of this section is, I fear, seriously confused. Historians certainly need to refer in their work to what is thought normal or appropriate as well as to what regularly occurs; but the thought in question is that of the persons of whom they write, not their own. Hence the problem of a uniform historical consciousness, as presented here, does not arise. For a different way in which the value judgments of historians bear on the question of historical objectivity see Additional Essay (A) below (pp. 169 ff.).]

6

SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY : KANT AND HERDER

§ 1. *General features*

The term 'philosophy of history' was generally understood a hundred years ago in a sense very different from that given it in the preceding chapters. We have taken it to designate a critical enquiry into the character of historical thinking, an analysis of some of the procedures of the historian and a comparison of them with those followed in other disciplines, the natural sciences in particular. Thus understood, philosophy of history forms part of the branch of philosophy known as theory of knowledge or epistemology. But the conception of it entertained by most writers on the subject in the nineteenth century was entirely different. 'The' philosophy of history, as they called it, had as its object history in the sense of *res gestae*, not *historia rerum gestarum*; and the task of its exponents was to produce an interpretation of the actual course of events showing that a special kind of intelligibility could be found in it.

If we ask why history was thus thought to constitute a problem for philosophers, the answer is because of the apparently chaotic nature of the facts which made it up. To nineteenth-century philosophical eyes history appeared to consist of a chain of events connected more or less loosely or accidentally, in which, at first sight at any rate, no clear plan or pattern could be traced. But to accept that description of history, i.e. to take it at its face value, was for many philosophers of the period a virtual impossibility,

for it meant (so they thought) admitting the existence in the of something ultimately unintelligible. To persons brought up to believe with Hegel that the real is the rational and the rational the real, this was a very shocking conclusion to come to, one which ought to be avoided if any way of avoiding it could be found. The way suggested for avoiding it was by the elaboration of a 'philosophy,' or philosophical interpretation, of history which would, it was hoped, bring out the rationality underlying the course of historical events by making clear the plan according to which they had proceeded.

A 'philosophy' of history in this special sense meant, as will be evident, a speculative treatment of detailed historical facts, and as such belonged to metaphysics rather than theory of knowledge. In Hegel himself it was only part of a comprehensive project conceived with incredible boldness—to display the underlying rationality of all sides and aspects of human experience. The philosophy of history took its place in this project alongside the philosophies of nature, art, religion and politics, to all of which the same general treatment was applied.

But though it is with the name of Hegel that this type of speculation is now most readily connected, it would be wrong to suppose that Hegel was its originator. To make such an assumption would, in fact, be doubly erroneous. For firstly, philosophy of history as treated by Hegel in his famous lectures in the 1820's had been familiar to the German public at least for the best part of half a century: Herder, Kant, Schelling and Fichte had all made contributions to it, and their questions and conclusions had a profound effect on Hegel's own views. And secondly, as Hegel well knew, the basic problem with which both he and they were concerned was a very ancient one, which had occurred to philosophers and non-philosophers alike. 'That the history of the world, with all the changing scenes which its annals present,' we read in the concluding paragraph of Hegel's lectures, 'is this process of development and the realisation of Spirit—this is the true Theodicaea, the justification of God in history.' To justify God's ways to man, and in particular to show that the course of history could be interpreted in a manner not inconsistent with accepting divine providence, had been a recognised task for theologians and Christian apologists for many centuries. The writers of the Old Testament

I had been aware of its importance, it had been treated at length by St Augustine in his *City of God*, and it had provided the theme for Bossuet's *Discourse on Universal History*, published in 1681, as well as for Vico's *New Science* (1725—44). To produce a philosophical interpretation of history along these lines was, it had long been thought, an obvious requirement in any solution of the general metaphysical problem of evil.

I Nor is this all. For if these speculations, as the foregoing remarks I will suggest, had a theological origin and a recognised place in I Christian apologetics, they had their secular counterpart too—in I the theories of human perfectibility and progress so dear to the I thinkers of the Enlightenment. The writers who, like the French I Encyclopaedists, propounded such theories were also in their way I engaged on the construction of philosophies of history. They too I were attempting to trace a pattern in the course of historical change; I they too, to put it very crudely, were convinced that history is I going somewhere. And despite their many differences from the I theologically-minded, they felt the same need on being confronted I with the spectacle of human history, the need to show that the I miseries men experienced were not in vain, but were rather inevitable I stages on the way to a morally satisfactory goal.

I The last point is, I suggest, worth special emphasis, if only I because it serves to explain the recurrent interest of philosophy I of history of this kind (for example, the interest in Professor I Toynbee's writings today). On the face of it the programme I mentioned above—the project for penetrating below the surface I of history to its hidden meaning—seems scarcely respectable. It I savours of a sort of mystical guesswork, and thus has its execution I appeared to many hard-headed men. But we miss the point of these I enquiries if we leave out of account the main factor which gives I rise to them. It is the feeling that there is something morally I outrageous in the notion that history has no rhyme or reason in I it which impels men to seek for a pattern in the chain of historical I events. If there is no pattern, then, as we commonly say, the I sufferings and disasters which historians narrate are 'pointless' and I 'meaningless'; and there is a strong element in human nature which I revolts against accepting any such conclusion. No doubt it is I open to critics of the programme to argue that those who devise I it are guilty of wishful thinking; but this is a charge which cannot

be accepted without an investigation of the results alleged to be achieved.

§ 2. *Kant's philosophy of history*

We must pass from these generalities to particular examples of the speculations in question.

I propose to discuss first the essay contributed by Kant to the periodical *Berlin Monthly*, in November 1784, under the title 'Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan point of view'; and I must begin by giving reasons for what some may think a curious choice. It could not be claimed for Kant either that he was first in the field in this subject or that his work in it (which amounted in all to no more than two short papers and a lengthy review) was of primary importance in determining the course of subsequent speculation: on both counts he must clearly yield pride of place to Herder. Nor again could it be maintained that Kant had a genuine interest in history for its own sake, or any grasp of the possibilities of historical research: as has often been remarked by critics of his general philosophy, his outlook was singularly unhistorical, and he remained in this as in other respects a typical product of the Enlightenment rather than a forerunner of the Romantic Age which was shortly to follow. But for all that his work on philosophy of history, and in particular the essay we are to study, remains instructive for the modern reader.

It is instructive, I suggest, for two main reasons. First, because it enables us to grasp with singular clarity just what it was that speculative philosophers of history set out to do. Kant's natural modesty and sense of his own limitations make him especially valuable in this connection. He saw that no one could undertake a detailed philosophical treatment of history of the kind he had in mind without a wide knowledge of particular historical facts; and since he made no pretence of having such knowledge himself, he confined himself to sketching the idea of (or, as he put it himself, 'finding a clue to') a philosophy of history, leaving it to others to carry the idea out. In reading Kant on this subject we are not faced, as we are when we read, e.g., Herder or Hegel, with the problem of disentangling a theory from its application, nor with that of making due allowance for inadequate empirical knowledge.

Secondly, Kant's work is instructive because it brings out in an

unmistakable way the moral background to this kind of speculation. With him at least philosophy of history was a pendant to moral philosophy; indeed, there is little to suggest that he would have treated of history at all if it were not for the moral questions it seemed to raise. Just what these questions were is indicated with force and clarity more than once in the essay. Thus in the introductory section¹ we read:

One cannot avoid a certain feeling of disgust, when one observes the actions of man displayed on the great stage of the world. Wisdom is manifested by individuals here and there; but the web of human history as a whole appears to be woven from folly and childish vanity, often, too, from puerile wickedness and love of destruction: with the result that at the end one is puzzled to know what idea to form of our species which prides itself so much on its advantages.

And in a later passage² he asks:

What use is it to glorify and commend to view the splendour and wisdom of Creation shown in the irrational kingdom of nature, if, on the great stage where the supreme wisdom manifests itself, that part which constitutes the final end of the whole natural process, namely human history, is to offer a standing objection to our adopting such an attitude?

If history is what it appears to be, a belief in divine providence is precluded; yet that belief, or something like it (the argument runs),³ is essential if we are to lead a moral life. The task of the philosopher as regards history is accordingly to show that, first appearances notwithstanding, history is a rational process in the double sense of one proceeding on an intelligible plan and tending to a goal which moral reason can approve.

How is this result achieved? The 'clue' to the philosophical interpretation of history which Kant has to offer turns out to be very simple: it is, in effect, a variation on the common eighteenth-century theory of progress. History, he suggests, would make sense if it could be seen as a continuous, though not perhaps straightforward, progression towards a better state of affairs. Have

1. Berlin edition of Kant's works, VIII, 17-18.

2. VIII, 30.

3. Compare the argument in § 87 of the *Critique of Judgment*.

we any ground for assuming that such a progression is real? Certainly not if we confine ourselves to looking at historical happenings solely from the point of view of the individuals concerned: there we meet with nothing but a chaotic aggregate of apparently meaningless and unconnected events. But the case may be different if we transfer our attention from the fortunes of the individual to that of the whole human species. What from the point of view of the individual appears 'incoherent and lawless' may none the less turn out to be orderly and intelligible when looked at from the point of view of the species; events which previously seemed to lack all point may now be seen to subserve a wider purpose. It is after all possible that in the field of history Nature or Providence (Kant uses the two terms interchangeably) is pursuing a long-term plan, the ultimate effect of which will be to benefit the human species as a whole, though at the cost of sacrificing the good of individual human beings in the process.

We have now to ask whether this is more than an idle possibility. Kant proceeds to develop an argument to show that we not only can but must accept the idea. Man has implanted in him (the standpoint adopted is throughout teleological) a number of tendencies or dispositions or potentialities. Now it would be contrary to reason (because it would contravene the principle that Nature does nothing in vain) to suppose that these potentialities should exist but never be developed, though in the case of some of them (those particularly connected with reason, e.g. man's inventive faculty) we can see quite well that the full development cannot take place in the lifetime of a single individual. We must therefore imagine that Nature has some device for ensuring that such potentialities get their development over a long period of time, so that they are realised so far as the species is concerned, though not in the case of all its individual members.

The device in question is what Kant calls¹ 'the unsocial sociability' of man. He explains himself in a passage from which I will quote at length:

Man has an inclination to associate himself with others, since in such a condition he feels himself more than man, thanks to his being able to develop his natural capacities. On the other hand he also has a strong propensity to cut himself off (isolate himself) from his fellows, since he

i. op. cit., VIII, 20.

finds in himself simultaneously the anti-social property of wanting to order everything according to his own ideas; as a result of which he everywhere expects to meet with antagonism, knowing from his own experience that he himself is inclined to be antagonistic to others. Now it is this antagonism which awakens all the powers of man, forces him to overcome his tendency to indolence and drives him, by means of the desire for honour, power or wealth, to procure for himself a position among his fellows, whom he can neither get on with nor get on without, thus it is that men take the first real steps from the state of barbarism to that of civilisation, which properly consists in the social worth of man; thus it is that all talents are gradually developed, that taste is formed, that a beginning made towards the foundation of a way of thinking capable of transforming in time the rude natural tendency to moral distinctions into determinate practical principles: that is to say, capable of converting in the end a social union originating in pathological needs into a moral whole. But for these anti-social properties, unlovely in themselves, whence springs the antagonism every man necessarily meets with in regard to his own egoistic pretensions, men might have lived like the shepherds of Arcadia, in perfect harmony, satisfaction and mutual love, their talents all remaining for ever undeveloped in the bud.¹

It is, in fact, precisely the bad side of human nature—the very thing which causes us to despair when we first survey the course of history—which Nature turns to account for the purpose of leading man from the state of barbarism into that of civilisation.

The transition is, or rather (since it is not supposed to be complete) will be, effected in two main stages. The first consists of a passage from the state of nature to that of civil society. But not every form of civil society is adequate for the purpose Kant has in mind: a despotic or totalitarian community, for example, would not be suitable. What is needed is a society which, as he himself writes it, 'combines with the greatest possible freedom, and in consequence antagonism of its members, the most rigid determination to guarantee the limits of this freedom, in such a way that the freedom of each individual may coexist with that of others.'² What is needed, in fact, is a liberal society, with full play for private enterprise. But it is not enough (and here we pass to the second stage of the transition) for this ideal to be realised in a single community. The situation, familiar to the readers of Hobbes, of

1. VIII, 20-22.

2. VIII, 22.

the war of individuals against each other is repeated, as Hobbes also saw, in the international sphere; and the attainment of a perfect civil society requires a regulation of international as well as national affairs. Hence we must suppose that the final purpose of Nature in the sphere of history is the establishment of a confederation of nations with authority over all its members, and that it is to this goal that men will finally be driven by the miseries its absence brings about. But it should be noted that these miseries, the most prominent of which is war, are not themselves wholly pointless: on the contrary, war stimulates men to exertions and discoveries they would otherwise not have made, and so contributes to the realisation of Nature's design. And even when an international authority is set up Kant clearly does not think of nations as losing their identity and ceasing to emulate one another; otherwise, as he points out, 'the powers of the human race will go to sleep.'¹

'The history of the human species as a whole may be regarded as the realisation of a secret plan of Nature for bringing into existence a political constitution perfect both from the internal point of view and, so far as regards this purpose, from the external point of view also: such a constitution being the sole condition under which Nature can fully develop all the capacities she has implanted in humanity.'² This is the conclusion drawn by Kant from the foregoing arguments, and offered by him as a clue to the construction of a philosophy of history. That the argument which leads up to it is in large part *a priori* he has no wish to deny. Will an empirical survey of the actual course of events confirm the reliability of these *a priori* speculations? Wisely pointing out that the period for which we have historical records is too short for us to hope to trace in it anything like the general form which history as a whole must take, Kant nevertheless holds that the evidence, as far as it goes, does confirm his suggestions. But he leaves it to others better versed in the subject than himself to write a universal history from the philosophical point of view, merely remarking that his putting the project forward is in no way intended to detract from the prosecution of historical studies by empirical means. It is not a short cut to the discovery of historical facts he is offering; merely a way of looking at the facts once they are discovered.

1. VIII, 26.

2. VIII, 27.

§ 3. Criticism of Kant's theory

So much by way of summary of Kant's theory; we must now turn from exposition to evaluation.

I shall begin with a point which will readily occur to readers of the preceding pages: the external character of Kant's approach to history. I refer to the fact that there is on his theory a complete rift between the activity of the historian discovering facts about the past and that of the philosopher devising a point of view from which sense can be made of them. The philosopher, it appears, can produce a rationale of history without taking any account of the detailed course of historical change. His standpoint is reached by the combination of a number of *a priori* principles (such as that Nature does nothing in vain) with certain broad generalisations about human behaviour, generalisations which may be confirmed by a scrutiny of historical records but are not necessarily arrived at by processes of historical research. And the comment we must make on this is that though Kant puts his standpoint forward as one from which some future historian may attempt a satisfactory universal history, it is by no means clear that the project will have any appeal to working historians. For if we are assured in advance of experience (and in some sense we are assured, though the point, as we shall see, is a difficult one) that history does and must conform to a certain pattern, what incentive is there to undertake the laborious task of tracing that pattern empirically?

Two possible ways of meeting this difficulty must now be considered.

First, it might be urged that the *a priori* knowledge Kant is ascribing to the philosopher of history is on his own account very limited in scope, and so far from constituting a bar to positive historical enquiry ought rather to act as a stimulus to it. The argument for its so doing would depend for its plausibility on appeal to a parallel case—that of the philosophy of nature. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* and elsewhere Kant tried to show that there were certain propositions of a very general kind which philosophers could assert about nature independently of experience, and argued that the knowledge of these propositions was a positive encouragement to empirical enquiry (for instance, the conviction that nature is orderly stimulated Kepler to further investigations in the face

of discouraging results). Similarly, it might be said, knowledge of the proposition that there is a certain pattern in the historical process should encourage historians to pursue their studies, much as the conviction that there is a way out of a maze encourages the lost to go on looking for it.

But this line of defence fails when we observe that the parallel adduced is not strictly accurate. The 'universal laws of nature,' of which Kant claims in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that we have *a priori* knowledge and of which the general law of causality is the best-known instance, are one and all formal principles: they are of use in enabling us to anticipate, not the details, but only the general form of experience. By knowing the principle that every event has a cause, for instance, we know nothing about the causal connections between particular events; we know only that it is reasonable to look for causes whenever we meet with natural events. To put the point another way, from the proposition that all events have causes nothing follows about the particular causal relations we shall meet with in nature. But the principle taken for granted by the Kantian philosopher of history is in this respect quite different; for when we are assured of that principle, as Kant thinks we are, we are assured not merely that there is a pattern in history but further that it is a pattern *of a certain kind*. In other words, the principle assumed in Kant's philosophy of history is a material principle, and it is just because of this that its relation to the assertions of working historians is of importance.

We are therefore driven back on the alternative line of defence, to which I shall make a somewhat devious approach.

It is a common practice among philosophers today to follow Leibniz in dividing true propositions into truths of fact and truths of reason. Truths of fact are validated or confuted by reference to particular experiences; truths of reason, about the nature and number of which there is much controversy, are agreed to be valid irrespective of what in particular occurs. Now the question might be asked into which class we should put the principle of the Kantian philosopher of history (if we can refer in this way to the sentence quoted on p. 125 above). The answer is not easy to find. For on the one hand we must say that the principle looks like a factual truth, since, as we have just seen, it concerns not the form but, in a wide sense, the matter of experience. On the other hand it seems reasonably

clear that Kant did not envisage the possibility that it was open to confutation by experience, but regarded it as resting on *a priori* grounds; and in this respect it looks like a truth of reason.

What this suggests is that the status of Kant's principle, and our supposed knowledge of it, require more careful investigation than we have hitherto given to them. And when we compare what he has to say about history with some of his other doctrines (notably those in the appendix to the Dialectic in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and those in the *Critique of Judgment*) we see that he is in fact assigning a special standing to the principle he has sought to establish. He regards it, in fact, neither as an empirical proposition nor as a necessary truth in the sense in which the general law of causality is for him a necessary truth, but rather as what he calls in the first *Critique* a regulative or heuristic principle, useful in the prosecution of empirical research but not itself susceptible of any kind of proof. And for that reason it is not, in the strict sense, 'known' to anyone. The only propositions which, in Kant's view, we can be said to know are, on the one hand, propositions concerning matters of fact, on the other propositions such as the 'universal laws of nature' mentioned above; and the principle with which we are concerned falls into neither class. It is a principle of whose truth we can have subjective but not objective certainty; we can be assured of it, thanks to its being closely involved in moral practice,¹ but more than that we cannot claim.

Recognition of these subtleties puts Kant's case in a different light; yet even so the position is not wholly clear. We are now being invited to believe that the principle which guides the philosophical historian is a heuristic principle, which would assign it the same status as, for example, the principle of teleology, to which, Kant thought, working biologists must make appeal. When we adopt that principle we direct our scientific studies on the assumption that nature is working purposively, at any rate in regard to some of her products; and this is (or may be) an important step on the road to scientific discovery. If this parallel can be justified—if we can show that there is a precise analogy between what the historian gets and what the biologist gets from philosophy—then Kant's contention is at any rate a respectable one. Unfortunately

1. See the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled 'On Opinion, Knowledge and Belief' (B848/A820).

here again the parallel suggested does not seem to be exact.

The trouble is that Kant is claiming that philosophers can provide working historians not merely with a general principle (as they can provide working biologists with the general principle of teleology), but with a special principle of a particular kind. If I am warranted in assuming the teleological principle in nature I am warranted in expecting that I shall meet in nature with examples of purposive behaviour; and I plan my researches accordingly. What I have done is to accept teleology as a methodological postulate or working assumption. But an assumption of that kind does not lead me to anticipate finding any particular sort of purposive pattern in nature. By contrast, if I accept the Kantian principle of historical interpretation, I am able to say, without reference to experience, not only that history has a plot, but also, in general terms, what that plot is. As we saw before, it is not only the form of experience that Kant's principle enables me to anticipate, but, to an important extent, its matter too; and this it is which makes everyday historians suspicious of the Kantian account.

It is useless in this connection to point out that, if we follow Kant strictly, we cannot be said to 'know' in advance of experience the general plot to which history may be expected to conform. We do indeed lack scientific knowledge of it, just as we do of other principles of the heuristic kind; but this has no bearing on the situation. For the fact remains that on Kant's view we are well assured of the principle in question. We may not be able to prove it, but that does not mean that it is open to doubt.

I conclude that though the Kantian doctrine is a great deal more complex and more subtle than might appear at first sight, it is nevertheless one which historians would find difficult to characterise as odier than arbitrary. The problem for a theory of this type is to give an account of the relation of the *a priori* to the empirical elements in philosophical history, to avoid the easily proffered reproach that the philosophical historian is merely making the facts up, or selecting them, to suit his own wishes. It does not seem to me that Kant has an adequate answer to this problem, though he was acutely aware of the general problem of which it is a specification. Nor is it comforting to observe that parallel difficulties are to be found in regard to Hegel's philosophy of history, as we shall presently see.

In the above remarks I have concentrated exclusively on the epistemological side of Kant's theory of history. I should add at this point that there are critics such as Mr Carritt,¹ who have attacked Kant's views on moral grounds as well, urging that history cannot have a moral point if it demands (as Kant seems to be saying) so many innocent victims in the accomplishment of its goal. But this is a charge which I shall not discuss, since in my view Kant's theory falls to the ground independently of whether it can be met successfully or not.

§ 4. Herder's philosophy of history

To pass from the writings of Kant to those of Herder, the next author to be considered, is to pass from one age to another; though in fact the first part of Herder's *magnum opus*, *Ideas for a Philosophical History of Mankind*, appeared a few months earlier than the essay we have just been examining. Herder had been in his youth a pupil of Kant's, but the mature ideas and outlook of the two men could scarcely have been more opposed. Kant, born in 1724, was a product of the Enlightenment: cool and critical in temper, cautious in speculation and suspicious of all forms of mysticism, he was touched only slightly² by the upsurge of Romanticism which had so profound an effect on German intellectual life in the closing years of the eighteenth century. But Herder was born twenty years later; he was a man of sensibility rather than cold intellect; speculation and passion were in his blood. It was scarcely surprising in these circumstances that he came to despise the precise Kantian antitheses of empirical and *a priori*, content and form, with all the conclusions Kant had drawn from them about the competence of the human mind to acquire knowledge. By nature it was in intuition rather than discursive intellect that he felt inclined to put his trust. As might be expected, his results, whilst at times brilliant and suggestive, were at others extraordinarily odd.

Herder's masterpiece (for so, despite everything, it must be

I. E. F. Carritt; *Morals and Politics* (1947).

1. That he did feel its influence in some degree could not be denied: the *Critique of Judgment* (in particular, the discussion of teleology, which greatly interested Goethe) bears witness to that. But when he does speculate he is always careful to point out the hazardous character of his own procedure, and it is in this that he differs from his immediate successors.

much the hardest of the problems about historical causation with which I began this discussion, and I fear I can do little towards solving it now. I am inclined to think that if historians were more familiar with the theories from which they took their analytical concepts they might prove in practice both more confident and more adept in handling them, and so better at choosing between alternative sets. Theoretical study could at least sharpen insight into the interconnections of such a set of ideas, and in so doing enable the historian to appreciate their proper explanatory force. But I also want to suggest that part of the difficulty here, as was the case with the more primitive types of historical causation we considered earlier, may arise from the prevalence of the notion that history is respectable only if written from no point of view. The answer to the man who wonders whether the right way to see nineteenth-century European history is in terms of national aspirations or of economic necessities may well be to ask him to declare his interests. The two sorts of history, in other words, could well be complementary rather than alternatives. Historians so far have perhaps been precluded from accepting this line because of their commitment to the notion of general history, an idea which is widely accepted but which all the same seems to cry out for critical scrutiny. But I hope I shall be forgiven if I do not embark on any such scrutiny here.

NOTE ON BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

i. *General*

The main problems of critical philosophy of history are discussed at an advanced level in Morton White's *Foundations of Historical Knowledge* and A. C. Danto's *Analytical Philosophy of History*, both published in 1965. Danto has a chapter exploring the conceptual difficulties of 'substantive', i.e. speculative, philosophy of history. William Dray's *Philosophy of History* (1964) is a short but sophisticated introduction to both sides of the subject. W. B. Gallie's *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (1964) stresses the narrative element in history interestingly. Among older books the reader should not miss Collingwood's *Idea of History* (1946; Ed. T. M. Knox), which is always challenging if not always satisfying. He should also consult the writings of Dilthey (conveniently excerpted in H. P. Rickman's *Meaning in History*, 1961) and Croce, as well as Bradley's early essay *The Presuppositions of Critical History* (1874; reprinted in *Collected Essays*, vol. I, 1935).

Extracts from Dilthey, Croce and Collingwood, together with the main speculative philosophers of history and some contemporary writers, are given in P. Gardiner's useful anthology *Theories of History* (1959). Fritz Stern's *The Varieties of History* (1956) complements this by including extracts from some of the classical historians about the nature and methods of history. For recent pronouncements by historians see especially Marc Bloch's *The Historian's Craft* (E.T., 1949) and E. H. Carr's lively *What is History?* (1961).

2. *Critical Philosophy of History*

Historical explanation has been extensively discussed in recent years.

Statements of the 'idealist' view mentioned in Chapter 2 are to be found in Dilthey and Collingwood, op. cit. for an acute discussion of Collingwood's position see A. Donagan, *The Later Philosophy of R. G. Collingwood* (1962). The classical statement of the 'positivist' thesis is Carl Hempel's 'The Function of General Laws in History' (1942; text in Gardiner's *Theories of History*), though K. R. Popper claims to have originated the theory. For Popper's views see his *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957). P. Gardiner in *The Nature of Historical Explanation* (1952) offers a modified version of the positivist theory; W. Dray in *Laws and Explanation in History* (1957) criticises this and reconstructs the idealist view. Isaiah Berlin in 'The Concept of Scientific History', in *History and Theory*, 1960, is also sympathetic to idealism. For further developments in the controversy see *Philosophy and History, a Symposium*, Ed. S. Hook (1963), with contributions by Dray and Hempel, among others.

Hook's volume can also be consulted on historical objectivity, as can the works cited by White and Danto, with J. W. Meiland, *Scepticism and Historical Knowledge* (1965). On causation in history there is a good chapter in White and some brief but useful comments in H. L. A. Hart and A. M. Honoré, *Causation in the Law* (1959).

3. *Speculative Philosophy of History*

Of the classical writers discussed or referred to in this volume there are English translations of Vico's *New Science* by T. G. Bergin and Max Fisch; Kant's essay 'Idea for a Universal History' by L. W. Beck in *Kant on History* (1963); Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* §§ 341-60 are relevant) by T. M. Knox, and his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* by J. Sibree; Comte's *System of Positive Policy*, vol. III, by E. S. Beesly and others. There is also an old translation of Herder's *Ideas*.

Historical information about this type of theorising is to be found in J. B. Bury's *The Idea of Progress* (1920) and in F. E. Manuel's *Shapes of Philosophical History* (1965). On particular writers the following are especially useful: on Vico, the introduction to his *Autobiography* by T. G. Bergin and Max Fisch; on Kant, Beck, op. cit. and E. L. Fackenheim in *Kantstudien*, 1956-7; on Hegel, W. Kaufmann: *Hegel* (1965); on Comte, H. B. Acton: 'Comte's Positivism and the Science of Society', *Philosophy*, 1951. Acton also has an excellent discussion of Marx on history in *The Illusion of the Epoch* (1955). For further light on Marx see S. Hook, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* (1934; with appendix containing four letters on historical materialism by Engels) and M. M. Bober, *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History* (1927).

On Toynbee see the essays and reviews collected by M. F. Ashley

Montagu in *Toynbee on History* (1956), together with Toynbee's replies to his critics in vol. XII of his *Study*, 'Reconsiderations'. On Spengler see H. S. Hughes, *Oswald Spengler* (1952). Among theological writers on history the following are especially notable: H. Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (1949); Reinhold Niebuhr, *Faith and History* (1949); R. Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (1957); see also A. Richardson, *History, Sacred and Profane* (1964) for general comment. The logical problems involved in attempts to discover laws or trace patterns in history are discussed in Popper, op. cit. and in I. Berlin, *Historical Inevitability* (1954)-