

# **THEORIES OF HISTORY**

**by**

**Stephen Priest**

Stephen Priest is Senior Research Fellow in Philosophy at the University of Oxford.

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## 1. Introduction: Critical and Speculative Philosophy of History

### 1. What is Philosophy of History?

If Philosophy is the attempt to solve problems we have no type of method for solving, then Philosophy of History is the attempt to solve philosophical problems which arise out of the study of history. History is the study of the past but is usually construed by historians as essentially the study of the human past; perhaps everything human beings have done and undergone, but with a shifting emphasis on what retrospectively seems important: wars, revolutions, battles, economic and political transformations, the inside of thought-worlds, art, industrialisation, empire, trade, the condition of working people or the privileged, and so on.

'History' is ambiguous between 'what happened in the past' and 'the study of what happened in the past'. A distinction between speculative and critical philosophy of history is parasitic on this ambiguity. Speculative philosophy of history is the attempt to answer: What is history as a whole? Does history have a meaning, purpose, or direction? If so, is history directed from within or without? Will history end? If so, in what way? Are historical events inevitable? Critical philosophy of history is the attempt to answer: What is historical explanation? Are there historical laws? Could the future be predicted by studying the past? Could history be or become a science? If not, why not? If so, how? Are there historical facts? If so, can we know them, in a way undistorted by our present language, and order of priorities.

Having drawn this sharp distinction between critical and speculative philosophy of history, it is clearly hard to engage in one without, to some degree, engaging in the other. It is hard to say much about historical method without, however implicitly, assuming a view of history as a whole. It is difficult to argue that history does or does not have a meaning, without implications for historical method. The Cambridge philosopher, C. D. Broad, distinguished critical from speculative philosophy. The Oxford philosopher, W. H. Walsh, applied the distinction to philosophy of history. However, its origin is in Kant's attack on metaphysics in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781,1787). Kant argues that the attempt to use reason *speculatively*, to describe reality in itself, generates contradictions. The correct philosophical method is *critical*;

the drawing of limits to the powers of reason, and the identification of the *a priori* conditions which make experience possible. In philosophy of history, as in so much else in philosophy, our ways of thinking remain consciously or unconsciously Kantian.

'History' ambiguous:

(1) What happened in the past

(2) The study of what happened in the past

(1) What happened in the past: what happened to human beings and what human beings did

ie History is human history

x2 kinds of Philosophy of History result:

(1) The philosophy of what happened in the past

(2) The philosophy of the study of what happened in the past.

(1) = Speculative Philosophy of History

(2) = Critical Philosophy of History

Philosophy = the attempt to solve philosophical problems.

A philosophical problem = a problem we have no method of solving.

Phil. Hist. = attempt to solve phil. problems that arise out of hist.

C. D. Broad drew crit./spec. distinction

Critical Philosophy of History:

What is historical explanation?

Is history a science?

Are there historical laws?

Are there historical 'facts'?

Is history 'subjective'?

Is there historical truth?

Crit phil hist and hist have distinct subject matters. Hist studies the past. Crit phil hist studies the study of the past.

Second order.

Speculative Philosophy of History:

What is history as a whole?

Does history have a purpose?

Does history have a direction?

Is history the working out of a plan?

Hist and spec phil hist have one and the same subject matter. Both study the past.

(NB: spec phil hist often includes claims about present and future or claims about history as a whole.)

First order.

Critical Philosophy of History:

‘It seems to me that the problems of critical philosophy of history, if I may begin with that, fall into four main groups.

(i) 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 as pursued in the natural sciences, for instance, or again perceptual knowledge. [...]

(p. 16)

(ii) Truth and Fact in History

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 other virtues of this theory, 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? [...] (p 17-18)

(iii) Historical Objectivity

(A) 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 (B) 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. [...] (pp 19-20)

[...] if we explain "history for its own sake" as a regulative maxim, it is important

and useful. In this sense, it means that history must be studied *as if* it had no bearing on anything beyond itself; the historian, in investigating the facts of the past, must not, at least in the first instance, consider anything beyond the facts themselves. In other words, it assumes that history is a science.' (Bury, 1958 244-5)

(iv) Explanation in History

'The question here is whether there are any peculiarities about the way the historian explains (or attempts to explain) the events he studies [...] there is a case for saying that history is a 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. (p 22)

'the value of historical inquiries is to find out not so much what there was, but how and why things have become what they were and are' (Ullmann, 1965 7)

'one trivial detail may be the means of leading us to the right reconstruction'  
(Bury, 1958 246)

Speculative Philosophy of History:

'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 attempting to realize 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.' W. H. Walsh *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (Harper ) pp 11-12

'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. W. H. Walsh *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (Harper ) p 25

'In the terminology of Professor Broad, the first is a speculative, the second a critical discipline.' W. H. Walsh *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (Harper ) pp 14-15

Critical and Speculative Philosophy of History are assumed to be distinct. However, they are much more closely related than is supposed. Critical and Speculative Philosophy of History are mutually dependent: It is not possible to engage in one without making assumptions about the other.

NB: spec phil hist subject to criticism in the C20<sup>th</sup>. But it would be odd if, say, physicists were not allowed to study the universe (or universes) as a whole.

### Philosophies of History

History is:

(1) tending towards an end or destiny

(1) cyclical

(2) deterministic, inevitable, necessary

(2) libertarian, contingent

(3) best studied scientifically

(3) best studied hermeneutically

(4) the unfolding of a plan or design

(4) arbitrary or meaningless

(5) essentially physical so materialism is true of it

(5) essentially constituted by consciousness so idealism is true of it

(6) governed by laws

(6) not governed by laws

'The triumph of any one Great Power in this period [c.1500 to present], or the collapse of another, has usually been the consequence of lengthy fighting by its armed forces; but it has also been the consequence of the more or less efficient utilization of the state's productive economic resources in wartime'

(Kennedy, 1988 xv)

'wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth.' (Kennedy, 1988 xvi)

'If, however, too large a proportion of the state's resources is diverted from wealth creation and allocated instead to military purposes, then that is likely to lead to a weakening of natural power over the longer term.' (Kennedy, 1988 xvi)

'In the same way, if a state overextends itself strategically – by, say, the conquest of extensive territories or the waging of costly wars -it runs the risk that the potential benefits of external expansion may be outweighed by the great expense of it all' (Kennedy, 1988 xvi)

functionalism:

'We conceive every historical event or phenomenon as a moment in a continuous process of change, and the historian's problem is to determine as completely as possible its connexions with what went before and with what came after'

(Bury, 1958 258)

'to define its causal relations'

'and its significance in the development to which it belongs.'

(Bury, 1958 258)

history as the science of civilisation:

'The unattainable ideal of historical research is to explain fully the whole development of human civilisation.'

'This is as much a scientific problem as to trace the history of the solar system or of animal life on the earth'

'though natural and historical science deal with very different kinds of data, and employ different methods.' (Bury, 1958 258)

## 2. Ancient Historians on History

### 3. Ancient Greek Historiography

The word 'history' derives from the Greek *istoria*; 'inquiry', 'inquisition', and *istor*; 'inquirer', 'investigator', 'consultant over disputes'. In Homer, if we allow the earthly interventions of gods, rather than God, as divine action, there is detailed description of pervasive divine action. But the ancient Greek historians distanced history from divine action. They distinguished history from mere chronicle, mythology, and epic poetry, notably Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Bury says 'They were not the first to chronicle human events, but they were the first to apply criticism.

And that means, they originated history.' (Bury, 1958: 1)

In the *Histories*, Herodotus (c. 490 – c. 429 BC) describes the causes and course of the Persian War (490 - 478 BC). Herodotus is influenced by the geography of Hecataeus, Persian and Greek chronicles, his own travels, Homeric epic poems, and the Greek myths. He understands history as narrative, especially of the rise and fall of civilisations, in particular the East/West clash of Greece and Persia. He compares cultures in a way that arguably invents anthropology. He uses written sources, oral traditions, and his own observations creating an early ethnography. Herodotus' bias is clearly Athenian and democratic rather than Spartan and Oriental. Is there divine action in Herodotus? Miracles and divine prophecies are mentioned but always as witnessed by human beings. Apollo predicts the sack of Athens and the Greek naval victory, the next day, at Salamis (480 BC). (Herodotus, 1971: VII) Poseidon destroys a Persian army unit with floodwater. (Herodotus, 1971: VIII) But, unlike Homer, Herodotus does not describe the actions of the gods. Herodotus prefers humanist and naturalistic explanations to supernatural, so commitment to divine action is minimised. However, there is destiny, doom, *nemesis*, necessity, inevitability, for example in the fall of the Persian Empire.

Aristotle cites Herodotus in distinguishing history from poetry:

'The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse – you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars.' (Aristotle, 1996: 141b)

The space of possibilities in Homer allows an essential role for divine action by the gods, that of the historian, less so.

The writing of Thucydides (c. 460 - c. 395 BC) is devoid of reference to divine intervention. In *The Peloponnesian War* (Thucydides, 1954) the war of the title (431-404 BC) is narrated to 411. Thucydides' influences include the Sophists, his own military training, and the holding of high military rank during the war: He was *Strategos* for Thrace. His banishment (after his loss of Amphipolis) and ownership of properties in Thrace, as well as Athens, allow a detached, objective, view of Athens. Thucydides seeks to explain the democracy and the empire of Athens by studying the war with Sparta.

Thucydides thinks history should record *current* events accurately (unlike Herodotus) Adhering strictly to questions relevant to the war: anthropology is left aside (again, unlike Herodotus) Thucydides excludes myth. (Herodotus includes myth, even though sceptical.) Thucydides relies on his own experience, oral testimony texts of treaties, letters, written orders. He also travelled, for example to Sicily. Thucydides' methods are like journalism in sources, but serious in style. They are inimical to any endorsement of divine action. The incomplete Book VIII (the first

draft) contains contradictory testimony from different sources. This suggests Thucydides' usual procedure is to iron out contradictions and take a decision on conflicting sources and not name them in finished writing. (The undigested texts in Book V also suggest this.) History should be explanatory but in a naturalistic or humanistic way. For example, the Corcyra incident determines the timing of the outbreak of the war, not whether there will be a war (*when* not *whether*). Thucydides allows characters to speak for themselves even though their speeches are often paraphrased. There is no destiny in Thucydides, only human actions and chance, contingency, unpredictability (for example, in the fall of the Athenian Empire)

There is, therefore, a progressive eradication of divine action in Greek historical thinking. In the epic poetry of Homer, divine action by the gods is essential to the stories. In Herodotus, what is taken as divine action is described but not the decision making process of the divine agents themselves. In Thucydides, there is a complete absence of divine action.

history is not:

chronicle

mythology

epic poetry: Iliad, Odyssey

word 'history':

*istor* = inquirer, investigator, consultant over disputes

*istoria* = inquiry, inquisition

'[the Greeks] They were not the first to chronicle human events, but they were the first to apply criticism. And that means, they originated history.' (Bury, 1958 1)

Herodotus ( )

Histories

The Persian War ( - 478 BC)

influences:

(1) geography of Hecataeus

(2) Persian and Greek chronicles

(3) own travels

(4) Homeric epic poems

(5) Greek myths

History:

(1) narrative

(2) rise & fall of civilisations (Greece, Persia)

(3) cultures compared (anthropology)

(4) human and naturalistic explanations preferred to supernatural

- (5) written sources (predecessors), oral traditions, own travels (ethnography)
- (6) bias is Athenian and democratic (rather than Spartan and Oriental)
- (7) but there is destiny, doom, nemesis, necessity, inevitability (eg fall of the Persian Empire)

‘This is the Showing forth of the Inquiry of Herodotus of Halicarnassos, to the end that 1 neither the deeds of men may be forgotten by lapse of time, nor the works 2 great and marvellous, which have been produced some by Hellenes and some by Barbarians, may lose their renown; and especially that the causes may be remembered for which these waged war with one another.’ Herodotus *Histories* Volume 1, Bk 1 ¶ 0

‘[...] as for me, it is to be understood throughout the whole of the history 103 that I write by hearsay that which is reported by the people in each place.’ Herodotus *Histories* Volume 1, Bk 2 ¶ 123

‘My history proceeded from the first seeking occasions for digression.’ Herodotus *Histories* Volume 1, Bk IV ¶ 30

‘The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse – you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars.’ (Aristotle, *Poetics* 141b)

Thucydides (- c. 399 BC)  
The Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC)

influences:

- (1) The Sophists
  - (2) Military training
  - (3) Strategos for Thrace in Peloponnesian War
  - (4) Banishment (after loss of Amphipolis) & travels (Sicily)
  - (5) Detached, objective view of Athens (properties in Thrace & Athens)
- yet seeks to explain (a) democracy & (b) empire of Athens by studying the war

history:

- (1) records current events accurately (unlike Herodotus)
- (2) relevance to Qs about the war: anthropology etc left aside (unlike Herodotus)
- (3) ‘He does not seek himself to furnish entertainment or to win a popular success, but to construct a record which shall be permanently valuable because it is true.’

(Bury, 1958 81)

(4) no myth (Herodotus includes myth, even though sceptical)

(5) own experience, oral testimony (like journalism in sources but serious in style), texts of treaties, letters, written orders

(6) The incomplete Book VIII (=first draft) contains contradictory testimony from different sources. Suggests Thucydides' usual procedure = to iron out contradictions, to take a decision on conflicting sources and not name them in finished writing. (+ undigested texts in Book V)

(7) explanatory. eg Corcyra incident determines timing of outbreak of war, not whether there will be a war. (when not whether)

(8) allows characters to speak for themselves (speeches often paraphrased)

(9) no destiny, only human actions and chance, contingency, unpredictability (eg fall of the Athenian Empire)

yet:

'The accurate knowledge of what has happened will be useful because, according to human probability, similar things will happen again' Thucydides (quoted in Bury 1958 243)

(10) 'Thucydides had no political aim in view; he was purely a historian'

(Bury, 1958 144)

dispassionate.

Machiavelli: *virtù*

Thucydides: *arete*

=political intelligence & ruthless will of ruler in *Realpolitik*

'Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it.' Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* Bk. I Ch. 1

'And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession

for all time.' Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* Bk. I Ch. 1

'The real cause [of the war] I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable.' Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* Bk. I Ch. 1

'This was the first cause of the war that Corinth had against the Athenians, viz., that they had fought against them with the Corcyraeans in time of treaty.' Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* Bk. I Ch. 2

'Only a mistaken judgment can object to including the interval of treaty in the war. Looked at by the light of facts it cannot, it will be found, be rationally considered a state of peace, where neither party either gave or got back all that they had agreed, apart from the violations of it which occurred on both sides in the Mantinean and Epidaurian wars and other instances, and the fact that the allies in the direction of Thrace were in as open hostility as ever, while the Boeotians had only a truce renewed every ten days.' Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* Bk. V Ch. 16

'I certainly all along remember from the beginning to the end of the war its being commonly declared that it would last thrice nine years. I lived through the whole of it, being of an age to comprehend events, and giving my attention to them in order to know the exact truth about them. It was also my fate to be an exile from my country for twenty years after my command at Amphipolis; and being present with both parties, and more especially with the Peloponnesians by reason of my exile, I had leisure to observe affairs somewhat particularly.' Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* Bk. V Ch. 16

Polybius (c.198-117 BC)

*History* Books I-V survive in full, VI-XL in part.

Roman military history esp:

Punic Wars (to 146 BC)

Macedonian War (to 168 BC)

annexation of Greece (146 BC)

'History [...] contains lessons to instruct the statesman or the military commander. No historian was more profoundly convinced of this truth than Polybius.'  
(Bury, 1958 243)

Cyclical view of history:

Accepts classification of types of government by Plato and Aristotle. (Book VI)

Argues they succeed one another in a cycle: Monarchy, Aristocracy, Democracy

(1) Anarchy.

society without government.

Struggle for survival.

Anarchy obtains intermittently, caused by famine, flood, plague

Mentally and physically stronger impose their will on the majority. This causes (2)

(2) Monarchy based on force

(3) Monarchy based on justice

(4) Tyranny

(5) Aristocracy

Most powerful elements in soc replace tyranny with rule by themselves.

(6) Oligarchy

= degenerate Aristocracy

(7) Democracy

(8) Ochlocracy

= mob rule

leads to Anarchy and the cycle begins again.

NB:

each form of government contains the seeds of its own destruction

remedy is for each form of government to contain elements of all the others

Polybius finds this in Sparta and in Rome (and says it explains their retaining power over time)

eg: in the Roman constitution:

(a) 'monarchy': the Consuls

(b) 'aristocracy': the Senate

(c) 'democracy': the popular assemblies

Comparative civilisation:

Roman compared with: Persian, Spartan, Macedonian (Book I Introduction)

'It is strangely inconsistent in historians to record in elaborate detail the founding of cities, stating when and how and by whom they were established, and even the circumstances and difficulties which accompanied the transaction, and yet to pass over in complete silence the characteristics and aims of the men by whom the whole thing was done, though these in fact are the points of the greatest value.' Polybius *Histories* Bk II (21)

*anacyclosis*

=cyclical history:

numerically distinct but qualitatively similar events over time.

Livy

History of Rome

(cf esp Preface for Phil Hist)

## History

- (1) History of Rome from existing records
- (2) humanistic not divine explanations
- (3) tries to sift truth from legend

crits:

'*verbosus et negligens*' Caligula (quoted in Bury, 1958 227)

- (1) secondary sources only (not docs or inscriptions)
- (2) does not visit battlefields (eg Lake Trasimene)
- (3) Early Roman bias (uncorrupted origins)

### 3. Early Christian Theories of History

#### 4. Early Christian Theories of History

The Old Testament contains clear and famous cases of divine action in history: God brings down the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6: 1-27) parts the Red Sea (Exodus 13 & 14) brings plagues on the Egyptians (Exodus 7-12). Indeed, God makes it plain that history will unfold according to His design:

"I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'" (Isaiah 46: 9-10)

The divine plan is implemented in history, partly through the setting of initial conditions in Creation, partly by acts of human free will conforming to the will of God, partly by divine action.

Both the Old and New Testaments are, *inter alia*, history books, and Christianity essentially includes a philosophy of history. Christianity is defined by a historical event: the appearance of God on earth in the form of Christ: the Incarnation. Christians think of history before the coming of Christ as preparation for the coming of Christ, and History after the coming of Christ as the living out of the effects of the coming of Christ. History is God's creation but history is fashioned by human free will. In a proto-existentialist fashion, human beings make themselves what they are. The chronological end of history is not the end of human existence: There is the hope of resurrection. History has an end in the sense of a meaning, a direction: The Kingdom of God will come. The righteous will populate the Kingdom of Heaven. History is, therefore, a preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven, a sifting of people into those destined for Heaven and those destined for Hell. The end of history is outside history: 'My kingdom is not of this world.' (John xviii 36).

Christ's miracles; walking on water, healing the sick, casting out demons, appearing on the third day after crucifixion, are cases of divine action in history

because, besides being miraculous local events, as miracles, their historical impact is immense. If Christ is God, then there is a sense in which any act of Christ is an act of God in History: if  $a$  is  $b$ , and  $a$  acts in history, then  $b$  acts in history. But, of course, there is a sharp distinction between Christ's acting as God, and as a man.

In *City of God*, Augustine distinguishes the Earthly City, those who will not be saved, from the Heavenly City, those who will be saved, variously; the faithful, the baptised, the truly ethical. History is a struggle between the two cities enacted, not just between individuals but within each individual.

St. Augustine does not doubt that there is divine action, paradigmatically, the Biblical interventions by God in history, but argues that miracles are not violations of natural laws. They are only violations of natural laws in so far as we know them. He says:

'[...] we say that all portents are contrary to nature; but they are not so. For how is that contrary to nature which happens by the will of God, since the will of so mighty a Creator is certainly the nature of each created thing? A portent, therefore, happens not contrary to nature, but contrary to what we know as nature.' (Augustine, 2000: Bk XXI Ch 8. 776)

Ireneus thinks that, by grace, the power to perform miracles may be delegated to, or inherited by, the followers of Christ. He says:

'[...] those who are in truth His disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His name perform [miracles], so as to promote the welfare of other men, according to the gift which each one has received from Him. For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe [in Christ], and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say?' (Irenaeus, 1885: Bk II Ch 32, para. 4)

Are these cases of divine action? If 'causes' means 'is sufficient for' then if  $a$  causes  $b$  to cause  $c$  then  $a$  causes  $c$ . But if  $a$  is only a necessary condition for  $b$  causing  $c$ , or if  $b$  might not have caused  $c$ , then  $a$  does not cause  $c$  deterministically. On the first construal, delegated divine action looks like divine action, on the second construal, less so, even though the delegation itself is divine action.

- (1) Old Testament & New Testament = (*inter alia*) history books therefore Christianity essentially includes a philosophy of history.
- (2) Christianity defined by a historical event: the appearance of God on earth in the form of Christ: the Incarnation.
- (3) History before coming of Christ = preparation of coming of Christ
- (4) History after coming of Christ = living out of the effects of the coming of Christ

(5) Human history understood for what it is:

(i) History = God's creation

(ii) History is fashioned by human free will (Human beings make themselves what they are.)

(iii) Chronological end of history is not the end of human existence. There is the hope of resurrection.

(iv) History has an end in the sense of a meaning, a direction. The Kingdom of God will come. The righteous populate the Kingdom of Heaven. History = a preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven, a sifting of people destined for Heaven or Hell.

Old Testament:

divine plan implemented in history

New Testament:

eschatology

Fall

Christ

salvation

'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.' Matthew xxii 17

'My kingdom is not of this world.' John xviii 36

'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of them that do well.' 1 Peter ii 13-17

'We ought to obey God rather than men.' Acts v 29

380 Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire

Christian Fathers

Ambrose of Milan (340-397)

'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.' Matthew xxii 17

Which things are Caesar's and which God's?

'In a matter of faith, bishops are wont to judge emperors, not emperors Bishops.'

Ambrose, *Letters* xxxii

'Quis est qui abnuet in causa fidei [...] episcopos solere de Imperatoribus christianis, non Imperatores de Episcopis judicare' *Ambrosii Epistola[e]* xxxii

Jerome (c.347 – 419 or 420)

late C4<sup>th</sup> Vulgate = trans by St. Jerome

'It is on account of the Greek word *kleros*, which means [in English] *lot* or *inheritance*, that the clergy are so called'

'either because they are of the lot of the Lord'

'or because the Lord is himself their lot or portion'

'And he that is the Lord's portion or who has the Lord for his portion must so conduct himself that he both possesses the Lord and is possessed by the Lord'  
[...] Rarely, if ever, should the foot of a woman cross your threshold.'  
Jerome *Letter to Nepotian* A.D. 394 (Jurgens II, 1350a p 185)

Augustine ( )

NB:

*servus*: servant, slave.

*servare*: to spare in battle

Roman jurists specify that the slave is he who is spared in battle.

The City of God:

x12 Books:

I-IV: Birth of the Two Cities: Earthly City and City of God

V-VIII: Progress of the Two Cities

IX-XII: End of the Earthly City & Existence of City of God

'The city of God we speak of is the same to which testimony is borne by that Scripture, which excels all the writings of all nations by its divine authority, and has brought under its influence all kinds of minds, and this not by a casual intellectual movement, but obviously by an express providential arrangement. For there it is written, Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. And in another psalm we read, Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness, increasing the joy of the whole earth. And, a little after, in the same psalm, As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God. God has established it for ever. And in another, There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. From these and similar testimonies, all of which it were tedious to cite, we have learned that there is a city of God, and its Founder has inspired us with a love which makes us covet its citizenship. To this Founder of the holy city the citizens of the earthly city prefer their own gods, not knowing that He is the God of gods, not of false, i.e., of impious and proud gods.' St Augustine *City of God* Book XI Ch. 1

'And by the words, God saw that it was good, it is sufficiently intimated that God made what was made not from any necessity, nor for the sake of supplying any want, but solely from His own goodness, i.e., because it was good. And this is stated after the creation had taken place, that there might be no doubt that the thing made satisfied the goodness on account of which it was made. And if we are right in understanding; that this goodness is the Holy Spirit, then the whole Trinity is revealed

to us in the creation. In this, too, is the origin, the enlightenment, the blessedness of the holy city which is above among the holy angels. For if we inquire whence it is, God created it; or whence its wisdom, God illumined it; or whence its blessedness, God is its bliss. It has its form by subsisting in Him; its enlightenment by contemplating Him; its joy by abiding in Him. It is; it sees; it loves. In God's eternity is its life; in God's truth its light; in God's goodness its joy.'

St Augustine *City of God* Book XI Ch. 24

### The Earthly City:

'Evil [...] this is a name for nothing but the want of good. But from things earthly to things heavenly, from the visible to the invisible, there are some things better than others; and for this purpose are they unequal, in order that they might all exist.' Ch 22

### The Separation into two Cities:

'The foundations of these two cities were originally laid, in the difference that arose among the angels.' St Augustine *City of God* Book XI Ch. 1

'the holy angels who maintain their allegiance to God, who never were, nor ever shall be, apostate, between whom and those who forsook light eternal and became darkness, God [...] made at the first a separation.' St Augustine *City of God* Book XI Ch. 28

### Entanglement:

'The two cities (the earthly and the heavenly) [...] are in this present world commingled, and as it were entangled together.' St Augustine *City of God* Book XI Ch.1

*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* First Series, Vol. 2. trans. Marcus Dods Philip Schaff. (ed.) (Christian Literature Publishing, Buffalo NY, 1887)

'St. Augustine considers the universe as a kind of unfolding, a *distensio*, which imitates in its flowing forth the eternal present and total simultaneity of the life of God.' (Gilson, 1936 385)

Ireneus ( )

5 'The will and the energy of God is the effective and foreseeing cause of every time and place and age, and of every nature. The will is the reason (λόγος) of the intellectual soul, which [reason] is within us, inasmuch as it is the faculty belonging to it which is endowed with freedom of action. The will is the mind desiring [some

object], and an appetite possessed of intelligence, yearning after that thing which is desired.'

11 The business of the [Christian](#) is nothing else than to be ever preparing for death (μελεπᾶν ἀποθνήσκειν).

Irenaeus Alexander Roberts trans. *Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol. 1. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (eds.) (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight.

Gregory the Great (Pope 590-604)

Existence:

'It is one thing to exist, another to exist of one's own nature. It is one thing to exist changeably, and another to exist unchangeably. For all these things exist, but they do not exist of their own nature, because they do not at all subsist in themselves, and unless they were maintained by a governing hand they could not exist at all [...] For all things were created out of nothing, and their being would return again to nothing if the Author of all did not keep that being in His guiding hand.' Gregory (Jurgens III, 2310 pp 315-316)

Sin:

'sin can be committed in three ways':

(1) 'in ignorance'

(2) 'in weakness'

(3) 'of set purpose'

'the sin committed in weakness is more grave than that done in ignorance; but that done of set purpose is much more grave than that done in weakness.' Gregory (Jurgens III, 2314 pp 317)

'But though *Geschichtsphilosophie* is a modern invention and Herder was its founder, the Christian construction marks an important state: for the historical process was for the first time definitely conceived as including past and future in a totality which must have a meaning.' (Bury, 1958 239-240)

4(a). Medieval Theories of History

## 5. Medieval Theories of History

Western Christendom inherits the Augustinian picture of history as the site of the struggle between the Earthly City and the City of God. History is divided into salient stages: History begins with the creation of humanity in Genesis. After Creation, and after the Fall, humanity is without Word, Faith or Law but the Chosen People live

under the Law. The coming of Christ allows living in Faith with knowledge of the Word. The Roman Empire was officially Christian since 380 so, when Alaric the Goth sacked Rome in 410, it was a Christian Roman Empire that fell. The baptised, live in its part resumption, the Holy Roman Empire from 800, neighbouring the Eastern Empire, which has existed since about 324. There will be a temporary reign of the Antichrist. There will be a second coming of Christ. The world will end in Judgement Day: the realisation of the Kingdom of God, arrival in Heaven, or consignment to Hell. divine action is clearly essential to this picture of history.

Crucially, the movement of history is linear not cyclical, and bounded at each end. The creation of humanity is the beginning of History, Judgement Day the end of History. The Medievals have a concept of History *as a whole*. History is the transient, the temporal, the impermanent. God, outside time, so outside history, is the permanent.

In the medieval world picture, divine action has an essential role in the establishment of Western Christendom and the legitimacy of earthly power. We may draw a distinction between two theories of law and government (following Ullmann, 1965 esp. 12-13).

On the Ascending theory of government, power resides in the people. Power is delegated to the king by the people. The king may only be legitimately removed by the will of the people. The theory expresses a kind of democracy, or populism, realised increasingly in the West through the English Revolution (1642-1660), the Glorious Revolution (1688), the American Revolution (1776-1783), the French Revolution (1789-1804). The Ascending theory could be modelled using inductive logic.

On the Descending theory of government, power resides in God. Power is delegated by God to the king, and by the king to the aristocracy. The King may only be legitimately removed by the will of God. The theory expresses theocracy. It is exemplified by those Germanic tribes which destroyed the Roman Empire, by contemporary Islamic theocracies, and by Western Christendom in the middle ages. The Descending theory could be modelled using deductive logic.

The Descending theory is implemented by Christ in history, when he says:

'Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church [...] And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Matthew xvi: 18-19

The founding of Western Christendom is a clear case of divine action in history: Christ is God, and acts as God. Christ's act is a speech act, so divine action can be a speech act, in the sense of John Searle. (See: Searle, 1969)

St Paul says: 'There is no power but God's' and 'the powers that be are ordained by God' (Romans xiii 1-7). Power (*potestas*) is only legitimate power, or authority, (*auctoritas*) when held or delegated by God. Because any earthly ruler rules

legitimately only by the grace of God, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's', in Matthew xxii 17, must be taken to imply that the ruler's power is only lent. If there is any doubt, or dilemma, the ethical and legal situation is clear: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.' Acts v 29. The adoption of these New Testament statements about divine action is essential to the medievals' picture of their place in history.

Aquinas engages in both critical and speculative philosophy of history; speculative, because he endorses the Christian picture of history as a whole, critical because he thinks we can learn from history. For example, Aquinas says:

'This indeed may be clearly seen from history. There has hardly ever been a polyarchy that did not end in tyranny. The best illustration of this fact is the history of the Roman Republic.'  
Aquinas *On Kingship (De Regimine Principum)* Ch. V ¶ [39]

Aquinas thinks there is divine action in history. He distinguishes three kinds, or degrees, of divine action: exceeding the power of nature, reversing the order of nature, causing events that conform to nature. These straightforwardly count as divine action in history because they are types of divine intervention in human affairs in time.

In understanding the medieval view of history, or of anything, there is an immense danger of unconscious retrospective falsification. The medievals did not draw our quite clean distinctions between the political, the religious, and the ethical. As Ullmann says: 'What mattered was the Christianity of man' (Ullmann, 1965: 16). Indeed, the term 'middle ages' was invented in the Renaissance: It means 'between two Hellenistic eras'.

x2 theories of law and gov (cf Ullmann, 1965 12-13)

(1) Ascending

Power resides in the people

Power delegated to the king by the people

King may only be removed by the will of the people

= democracy, populism

based on inductive logic

(2) Descending

Power resides in God: St Paul: 'There is no power but God's', 'the powers that be are ordained by God' (Romans xiii 1-7)

Power delegated by God to the king

Power delegated by the king to the aristocracy

King may only be removed by the will of God

= theocracy

based on deductive logic

(1) Germanic tribes which destroyed the Roman Empire & modern West

## (2) Western Christendom in the middle ages

atomisation

'[...] we speak of religious, moral, political, economic norms, and we are inclined to say that this or that activity is religious, or political, or moral, and so on. The codes of these various norms are by no means identical, and it is often difficult to reconcile all the norms. But this atomization of the norms determining human actions is of rather recent date. For the larger part of the middle ages there was no such splitting up of human actions into different departments. The Christian idea itself militated against any kind of departmentalization. That one and the same human activity could be viewed from a moral and a religious and a political angle was not a way of thinking with which medieval man had been acquainted.' (Ullmann, 1965 16)

'[...] religion was not separated from politics, politics not separated from morals, and so on. What mattered was the Christianity of man' (Ullmann, 1965 16)

Western Christendom = the baptised.

Retrospective falsification to claim a conflict between 'Church and State' in the middle ages. (term 'state' emerges only in C13<sup>th</sup>)

There is conflict:

within Western Christendom

between *sacerdotium* and *regnum*

ie; priesthood and monarch

NB: conflict between Pope and Emperor = conflict over the sovereignty of Western Christendom

(1) King is entrusted by God with the welfare of the ruled

(2) King's relation to God mediated by the Pope, because of Matthew xvi:

'Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church [...] And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Matthew xvi: 18-19

The conflict between emperor and Pope is therefore not wholly accidental or contingent. It is inevitable given the descending theory of kingship in Western Christendom.

Pope Leo I (440-461)

The Pope exercises the powers Christ grants to St. Peter

Pope = *indignus haeres beati Petri* the unworthy heir of St. Peter

Each Pope directly inherits the powers of St. Peter, nor from any papal successor to St. Peter

The Pope has *plenitudo potestatis*, 'full power', 'the plenitude of power' by Matthew xvi

History = essentially the history of the Church

Authority of the Church legitimated *historically* in Matthew xvi

(1) society

(2) government

both founded in Matthew xvi

Emperor:

rules Roman Empire which has become Christian

Pope:

rules the Church (the faithful) which has become Roman

'the very term "political" did not enter the vocabulary of governments and writers before the thirteenth century' (Ullmann, 1965 17)

'government'

*gubernatio, gubernaculum, gubernator*

'jurisdiction'

*jus dicere*

to state the law, ie, to lay down the law

'subject'

the subjects are the *subjecti* (*sub*: 'under', *jacio* 'I throw'): the thrown down ones.

distinction between:

(1) office (eg the Papacy)

(2) holder of that office (eg the Pope)

law issuing from the office is 'official'

& binding irrespective of the character of the office holder.

*auctoritas*: authority

*potestas*: power

Pope has *auctoritas* (by Matthew xvi)

king has (mere) *potestas*

stages of history

(1) Origin of humanity in Genesis

(2) After creation and after the Fall: humanity is without Word, Faith or Law

(3) The Chosen People live under the Law

(4) Coming of Christ: allows living in Faith with knowledge of the Word

(5) Fall of the Roman Empire/continuation as Holy Roman Empire (Alaric the Goth sacked Rome in 410) (Roman Empire Christian from 380)

(6) Temporary reign of the Antichrist

(7) End of the world in Judgement Day: Kingdom of God and consignment to Hell

NB:

movement of History is linear not cyclical

Creation of Humanity = beginning of History

Judgement Day = end of History

Medievals have concept of History *as a whole*.

God and History

God is a-temporal:

'God is Being, and there is nothing which He can become because there is nothing which He is not; change and duration have therefore no existence for Him.'

(Gilson, 1936 385)

History is part of temporal reality:

'Created things, on the contrary, are finite participations of Being; fragmentary so to speak, always incomplete, they act in order to fulfil their own being, and therefore they change and consequently endure.' (Gilson, 1936 385)

History = between God and the physical universe

History *happens* in the instant: the *in-stans*. What is 'stands' 'in' the difference between the past and the future.

Peace:

(1) 'What men call peace is never anything but a space between two wars' (Gilson, 1936 399)

(2) 'God, the creator of human beings who move towards Him through time is Himself Peace.' (Gilson, 1936 400) 'He is Peace because he is One, and he is One because he is Being' (Gilson, 1936 400)

History = the story of the return to God.

Aquinas ( )

Learning from History:

'Experience thus teaches that one city administered by rulers, changing annually, is sometimes able to do more than some kings having, perchance, two or three cities; and small services exacted by kings weigh more heavily than great burdens imposed by the community of citizens. This held good in the history of the Roman Republic. The plebs were enrolled in the army and were paid wages for military service. Then when the common treasury was failing, private riches came forth for public uses, to such an

extent that not even the senators retained any gold for themselves save one ring and the one bulla (the insignia of their dignity).  
*Aquinas On Kingship (De Regimine Principum) Ch. V ¶ [32]*

‘Moreover, in point of fact, a polyarchy deviates into tyranny not less but perhaps more frequently than a monarchy. When, on account of there being many rulers, dissensions arise in such a government, it often happens that the power of one preponderates and he then usurps the government of the multitude for himself. This indeed may be clearly seen from history. There has hardly ever been a polyarchy that did not end in tyranny. The best illustration of this fact is the history of the Roman Republic.’  
*Aquinas On Kingship (De Regimine Principum) Ch. V ¶ [39]*

### Natural Law:

‘Now as "being" is the first thing that falls under the apprehension simply, so "good" is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the practical reason, which is directed to action, since every agent acts for an end under the aspect of good. Consequently the first principle in the practical reason is one founded on the notion of good, viz., that good is that which all things seek after. Hence this is the first precept of law, that good is to be done and ensued, and evil is to be avoided. All other precepts of the natural law are based upon this, so that whatever the practical reason naturally apprehends as man's good (or evil) belongs to the precepts of the natural law as something to be done or avoided.

Since, however, good has the nature of an end, and evil the nature of a contrary, hence it is that all those things to which man has a natural inclination are naturally apprehended by reason as being good and, consequently, as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil and objects of avoidance. Wherefore the order of the precepts of the natural law is according to the order of natural inclinations. Because in man there is first of all an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances, inasmuch as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its nature ; and by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life and of warding off its obstacles belongs to the natural law. Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals; and in virtue of this inclination, those things are said to belong to the natural law "which nature has taught to all animals," such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring, and so forth. Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God and to live in society; and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law, for instance, to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the

above inclination. Aquinas *Summa Theologica* I-II 'Of the Natural Law' Q 94 Second Article 45-46

'To be sure, the light of reason is placed by nature in every man, to guide him in his acts toward his end. Wherefore, if man were intended to live alone, as many animals do, he would require no other guide to his end. Each man would be a king unto himself, under God, the highest King, inasmuch as he would direct himself in his acts by the light of reason given him from on high. Yet it is natural for man, more than for any other animal, to be a social and political animal,^ to live in a group.' Aquinas *On Kingship (De Regimine Principum)* Ch. I ¶ [4]

'This is clearly a necessity of man's nature.' For all other animals, nature has prepared food, hair as a covering, teeth, horns, claws as means of defense, or at least speed in flight, while man alone was made without any natural provisions for these things. Instead of all these, man was endowed with reason, by the use of which he could procure all these things for himself by the work of his hands.\* Now, one man alone is not able to procure them all for himself, for one man could not sufficiently provide for life unassisted. It is therefore natural that man should live in the society of many.' Aquinas *On Kingship (De Regimine Principum)* Ch. I ¶ [5]

Term 'middle ages' invented in the Renaissance: means between two Hellenistic eras.

4(b). Renaissance Theories of History

## 6. Renaissance Theories of History

If the Greek and Roman concepts of history are cyclical, and the medieval linear, the Renaissance concept is best understood as nostalgic: a longing for the restoration of hellenistic culture. Although the poetry, architecture, politics, and painting essentially exhibit a pervasive classical revival, from the late thirteenth century, the content is essentially Christian.

The cynical, or practical, *realpolitik* of Nicholo Machiavelli (1469-1527) is influenced by the warring city states (in which Renaissance Northern Italy resembled fifth century Greece), his role in Florentine administration (1498-1512), and his reading of the ancient Roman and, to a lesser extent, Greek historians. He writes during the continuing decline in power of the papacy and the Holy Roman Emperor, whose division of power, and whose conflicts, had defined the middle ages.

If Machiavelli provides a paradigm case of what we could call 'Renaissance philosophy of history', this finds no place for divine action. It is essentially critical rather than speculative: Political theory and practice are learned from history. Human nature is established as essentially the same over history, and human beings face essentially the same problems over time. The study of history provides parallels with

the present and facilitates prediction of the future. Niebuhr says: 'The Renaissance, which ostensibly restored classical learning, was actually informed by a very unclassical sense of history.' (Niebuhr, 1949: 2)

Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704), whose work is in many ways a reaction against Renaissance humanism, and against the foundations of the coming Enlightenment, aims to complete the project of Augustine's *City of God*, arguing that a divine plan is implemented in history. His repeated insistence on the divine right of kings clearly presupposes divine action: If there is legitimate rule by the grace of God then there is the grace of God. If there is the grace of God, there is divine action.

'The Renaissance, which ostensibly restored classical learning, was actually informed by a very unclassical sense of history.' (Niebuhr, 1949 2)

Machiavelli (1469-1527)

influences:

- (1) warring city states (Renaissance like ancient Greece)
- (2) role in Florentine administration (1498-1512)
- (3) revival of Greek and Roman thought (Renaissance). Machiavelli read the anc historians esp.
- (4) decline in power of the papacy and the Holy Roman Emperor

- (1) political theory learned from history
- (2) human nature essentially the same over history
- (3) human beings face essentially the same problems over history
- (4) study of history allows prediction of the future:

'Si cognosce facilmente come in tutte la città e in tutti I populi sono quelli medesimi desideri e quelli medesimi umori, e come vi furono sempre; in modo che egli è facil cosa [...] prevedere in ogni Repubblica le future [cose]' *Discourses on Livy* I  
'Introduction' I 39

(5) The study of history provides parallels with the present. The history Machiavelli studies is the history of Rome and, to a lesser degree, Greece.

Bossuet (1627-1704)

divine plan implemented in history

5. The Enlightenment

## 7. The Enlightenment View of History

The eighteenth century Enlightenment is an expression of optimism in the powers of human reason to bring about a secular utopia, or, at least, massive improvements in the earthly lot of humanity. It is the replacement of the Descending by the Ascending theory of government, and the replacement of religion by science.

It is customary to distinguish the French Enlightenment, of Diderot, Voltaire, d'Alembert, Condorcet, the German Enlightenment of Kant, the Scottish Enlightenment of Hume, Reid, Adam Smith. All these find an English origin in the Ascending political theory of John Locke's liberalism, and in the physics of Isaac Newton's salient contribution to the Scientific Revolution.

The Enlightenment thinkers are not unified by any common ontology. de la Mettrie is a materialist. Kant (as usually understood) is an idealist. According to Hume's empiricism, our distinction between mind and matter depends on prior acquaintance with impressions, which are intrinsically neither mental nor physical.

However, there is a common antipathy to metaphysics, and any theology which depends on it. Enlightenment thinkers are united by optimism: intellectual optimism: and political optimism. Intellectual optimism is faith in the powers of reason and science, not in faith, or mysticism, or divine action. To many, science seems nearly complete.

Political optimism is in the theses that society should, and will, be run in the interests of the individuals composing it, and not by the will or authority of God. Historically, these ideals could be implemented by Enlightened Monarchy: in the Prussia of Frederick the Great (r. 1740-86), the Austrian Hapsburg Empire of Maria Theresa (r. 1740-80) and her son Joseph II (r. 1764-1790), or the Russia of Catherine the Great (r. 1762-1796). The approved Enlightenment alternative to 'Enlightened Absolutism', or 'Enlightened Despotism', is a republic, for example: the USA from 1776, France from 1792. The legitimacy of the republic is in the will of the people, not by divine action. The Enlightenment is therefore a transition from subjects to citizens, from the medieval theocentric world picture to modernity, from the descending theory of government to the ascending, from the divine right of kings, to the rights of the people, from divine action to its absence. These developments are consciously seen and approved to be happening in history. So, on the Enlightenment view, there is progress in history. The goal of history is not the Heavenly City or the Kingdom of God. It is the Earthly City; a secular utopia.

There is a broadening of the scope of citizenship, advocated, for example, by Mary Woolstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Slaves were freed in the British Empire from 1807, in the USA in 1865.

Further hallmarks of the Enlightenment are scepticism, and individualism. Scepticism is the thesis that any claim might, in principle, turn out to be false, expressed, for example, in Hume's attack on divine action in his essay 'On Miracles' or in Voltaire's parody of Leibniz's thesis that God has created 'the best of all possible worlds'. Political individualism is the thesis that society exists only if the individual exists, social wholes act only if individuals act, and so on. Epistemological individualism is the thesis that the individual should discover facts, using their senses

and intellect, rather than rely on authority, or faith, or the Bible.

Bertrand Russell finds the origins of Enlightenment individualism in the Protestant Reformation, where the individual seeks a direct relation with God, without dependence on the Church hierarchy. (Russell, 2004) Certainly, the earlier Papal Schism in the Church (1378-1417) damaged the long-term authority of Christianity.

Anticipated by the Italian, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and the Romantics form a reaction to the Enlightenment from about 1790, but their mysticism, aesthetics, and emphasis on emotion, fall far short of a restoration of the medieval world picture or any endorsement of divine action.

Enlightenment optimism, and the doctrine of progress in history, have been severely damaged by two world wars (1914-18, 1939-45), mass unemployment (1929-1939), Hiroshima & Nagasaki (1945), Auschwitz (1941-45), and the growing possibilities of ecological catastrophe and nuclear terrorism. Alternative geometries to Euclid's, and then Quantum Physics, shattered the idea that science is complete. Nevertheless, faith in science, reason, and secular progress are still with us. The shedding of religious belief continues, and Locke's liberalism remains the profitable ideal of global capitalism. It is not obvious that any of this will survive or continue, announcements that history has 'ended', proving, so far, premature.

'The difference between the French Enlightenment's materialism and the idealism of the German Enlightenment made no appreciable difference in the common historical optimism of both.' (Niebuhr, 1949 3)

Vico (1668-1744)

*New Science* (1725, 1735 substantially revised, 1744)

an 'ideal human history'

all advanced societies pass through cycle of rise and fall

'nations' inevitably pass through recurring cycles:

- (1) from imagination to reason
- (2) from politics of force to politics of justice
- (3) from soc based on privilege to soc based on law

Stages of history:

- (1) Heroic
- (2) Divine
- (3) Civil

takes ancient world as main case study

history expresses Christian providence

Human nature historical so cannot be known *a priori*.

epistemology: A can know x only if A made x

God made Nature so only God can know Nature  
Human beings make history so human beings can know history  
Therefore, history is not a natural science.  
(but in QM the observer 'makes' some of the subject matter)  
Language and myth have to be studied.  
Imagination is essential tool of the historian.

Providence integral to history, not transcending history.  
Pattern of history neither intended nor foreseen by individual agents.

‘Philosophy undertakes to examine philology (that is, the doctrine of everything that depends on the human will; for example, all histories of the languages, customs and deeds of peoples in war and peace), of which, because of the deplorable obscurity of causes and almost infinite variety of effects, philosophy has had almost a horror of treating; and reduces it to the form of a science by discovering in it the design of an ideal eternal history traversed in time by the histories of all nations.’ (7)

‘Chronology and geography are the two eyes of history.’ (17)

‘XIII

144 Uniform ideas originating among entire peoples unknown to each other must have a common ground of truth.

145 This axiom is a great principle which establishes the common sense of the human race as the criterion taught to the nations by divine providence to define what is certain in the natural law of nations. And the nations reach this certainty by recognizing the underlying agreements which, despite variations of detail, obtain among them all in respect of this law. Thence issues the mental dictionary for assigning origins to all the divers articulated languages. By means of this dictionary is conceived the ideal eternal history which determines the histories in time of all the nations.

146 This same axiom does away with all the ideas hitherto held concerning the natural law of nations, which has been thought to have originated in one nation and been passed on to others.’

LXIII

236 The human mind is naturally inclined by the senses to see itself externally in the body, and only with great difficulty does it come to attend to itself by means of reflection.

237 This axiom gives us the universal principle of etymology in all languages: words are carried over from bodies and from the properties of bodies to express the things of the mind and spirit.

LXIV

238 The order of ideas must follow the order of things.

LXV

239 This was the order of human things: first the forests, after that the huts, thence the villages, next the cities and finally the academies.

240 This axiom is a great principle of etymology, for this sequence of human things sets the pattern for the histories of words in the various native languages.[...]

LXVI

241 Men first feel necessity, then look for utility, next attend to comfort, still later amuse themselves with pleasure, thence grow dissolute in luxury, and finally go mad and waste their substance.

LXVII

242 The nature of peoples is first crude, then severe, then benign, then delicate, finally dissolute.

LXVIII

243 In the human race first appear the huge and grotesque, like the Cyclopes; then the proud and magnanimous, like Achilles; then the valorous and just, like AHstides and Scipio Africanus; nearer to us, imposing figures with great semblances of virtue accompanied by great vices, who among the vulgar win a name for true glory, like Alexander and Caesar; still later, the melancholy and reflective, like Tiberius; finally the dissolute and shameless madmen, like Caligula, Nero, and Domitian.

244 This axiom shows that the first sort were necessary in order to make one man obey another in the family-state and prepare him to be law-abiding in the city-state that was to come; the second sort, who naturally did not yield to their peers, were necessary to establish the aristocratic commonwealths on the basis of the families; the third sort to open the way for popular liberty; the fourth to bring in the monarchies; the fifth to establish them; the sixth to over-throw them.

245 This with the preceding axioms [LXV-LXVII] gives a part of the principles of the ideal eternal history traversed in time by every nation in its rise, development, maturity, decline and fall.

Vico *The New Science* (1744)

Kant (1724-1804)

*Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* (1784) Berlin

Monthly November 1784

'finding a clue to' history

trying to solve problems in moral philosophy:

History includes appalling destruction and suffering. Casts doubt on the existence of God or a divine plan. Is there any moral point or justification for history?

History = the progress of humanity.

Distinguish:

1. individual human beings

2. humanity

1. particular historical events ('incoherent and lawless')

2. situation of humanity as a whole

1. gives grounds for pessimism

2. gives grounds for optimism

Individual is sacrificed for the good of humanity.

=utilitarianism, not deontology of the *Groundwork*.

(a) 'Nature'

(b) 'Providence'

= two names for one reality; the force or direction or director of history

Human potential is realised in Humanity over time but not necessarily in the case of any one human being in their lifetime.

'the unsocial sociability' of man

= paradoxical tendency or disposition:

(a) association, cooperation between human beings: social

(b) antagonism, isolation, ordering everything acc to own ideas: individual

(c) explains realisation of human potential over time.

(d) anticipates:

co-operation: socialism

competition: capitalism

'fellows, whom he can neither get on with nor get on without'

ie immoral aspects of humanity can contribute to progress. (eg war causes advances in technology with peaceful applications.)

x2 stages:

(1) state of nature to civil society

(2) civil societies to international confederation

civil society needs to be liberal and capitalist. Civil society:

'combines with the greatest possible freedom, and in consequence antagonism of its members, the most rigid determination and guarantee of the limits of this freedom, in such a way that the freedom of each individual may coexist with that of others' (Kant, 1784 22)

'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' (Kant, 1784 26)

synthetic *a priori* ? necessary?

empirical ? contingent?

'regulative Idea' ?

#### FIRST THESIS

All natural capacities of a creature are destined to evolve completely to their natural end.

#### SECOND THESIS

In man (as the only rational creature on earth) those natural capacities which are directed to the use of his reason are to be fully developed only in the race, not in the individual.

#### THIRD THESIS

Nature has willed that man should, by himself, produce everything that goes beyond the mechanical ordering of his animal existence, and that he should partake of no other happiness or perfection than that which he himself, independently of instinct, has created by his own reason.

#### FOURTH THESIS

The means employed by Nature to bring about the development of all the capacities of men is their antagonism in society, so far as this is, in the end, the cause of a lawful order among men.

#### FIFTH THESIS

The greatest problem for the human race, to the solution of which Nature drives man, is the achievement of a universal civic society which administers law among men.

#### SIXTH THESIS

This problem is the most difficult and the last to be solved by mankind.  
The difficulty which the mere thought of this problem puts before our eyes is this.  
Man is an animal which, if it lives among others of its kind, requires a master.

#### SEVENTH THESIS

The problem of establishing a perfect civic constitution is dependent upon the problem of a lawful external relation among states and cannot be solved without a solution of the latter problem.

#### EIGHTH THESIS

The history of mankind can be seen, in the large, as the realization of Nature's secret plan to bring forth a perfectly constituted state as the only condition in which the capacities of mankind can be fully developed, and also bring forth that external relation among states which is perfectly adequate to this end.

#### NINTH THESIS

A philosophical attempt to work out a universal history according to a natural plan directed to achieving the civic union of the human race must be regarded as possible and, indeed, as contributing to this end of Nature.

'Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View' (1784) trans Lewis White Beck from Immanuel Kant *On History* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1963)

Herder (1744-1803)

*Ideas for a Philosophical History of Mankind* ( )

25 Books. Only 20 completed. X10 Phil. Hist. X10 Hist.

Books I-V:

Physical universe

biology

humanity: walks upright, so:

reason

language

moral sense

Universe tends to free emergence of spirit

Humans between the animals and spiritual beings

Books VI-X:

Geography

Climate

Race

External forces = environment

Internal Forces = consciousness

jointly produce history

Books X-XX

world history

historical laws

environmental determinism

destiny of humanity is to be truly human

'We live in a world we ourselves create.'

Herder (SW VIII 252) quoted in (Berlin, 1976 143)

Romantic

revolts against the Enlightenment

endorses science but not scientism or positivism

central method is showing relation between the One and the Many

Universe = one process with many sub-processes and aspects eg:

Mental Physical

Individual Social

Private Public

Fact Value

(anticipates Hegel)

understanding history is by empathy, imagination

understanding x is understanding how x can be understood, how x can be taken as x, perceptually, linguistically, the social conditions for this, the physical conditions for those, etc. how x comes to be taken as 'natural'. (anticipates Marx)

Berlin (1976 pp 153 ff.) distinguishes x3 ideas in Herder:

(1) Populism

Valuable to belong to a group of culture.

Belonging to group or culture is non-political and sometimes anti-political.

Society is not identical with the state.

NB: These doctrines are quasi-anarchist.

(2) Expressionism

Human action, especially art, expresses the entire mentality of an individual or group.

Human action only comprehensible as this.

Human artefacts are not independently existing objects but are:

(i) essentially inseparable from their maker

(ii) 'voices'

(iii) parts of the process of communication

NB: (i)-(iii) *prior to* the notion of an artefact as a p.o.

Self-expression essential to being human

Self-expression to be understood on the model of art.

Human beings are like artists

The human being-artefact relation is like the artist-work of art relation

Human fulfilment consists in self-realisation through self-expression.  
History essentially overcoming of obstacles to human self-expression.

(3) Pluralism

(1) There is a multiplicity of societies with varying value-systems

(2) Some value systems are incommensurable

(3) Incommensurable value systems can be equally valid

(4) The ideas of an ideal society and an ideal form of humanity are incoherent and meaningless.

NB:

(1) acc Berlin, Populism, Expressionism and Pluralism are each incompatible with the theses of the Enlightenment.

(2) acc Herder, Populism, Expressionism and Pluralism mutually dependent.

quasi-anarchism:

'Millions of people live on the globe without states [...] father and mother, man and wife, child and brother, friend and man -these are natural relationships through which we become happy; what the state can give us is an artificial contrivance; unfortunately it can also deprive us of something far more important – rob us of ourselves.' (SW XIII 340-1) (Berlin, 1976 158 fn)

Condorcet (1743-1794)

Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind ( )

History = the history of progress:

intellect

art

universal suffrage

universal education

freedom of expression

legal equality

redistribution of wealth

(a) desirable

(b) inevitable

universal laws of history

facilitate:

(a) prediction

(b) understanding the present

History brought about by the masses, not 'Great Men'.

Enlightenment:

(1) Human senses and intellect can know the truth

(2) natural rights

(3) scientific methods of solving political problems

'It was not Scripture, to be sure, that guided the thought of Condorcet, but not the less he conceives the idea of drawing a "comprehensive picture of the progress of the human mind"; his philosophy of history has been run through a Christian mould of *tempora et aetates*, as if the succession of "epochs" was now the work of "progress" without the Christian God who assures the progress.' (Gilson, 1936 393)

'It is a typical case of a philosophical conception issuing from a revelation, appropriated by a reason that imagines itself to be the sole and true inventor, and then turned as a weapon against the revelation whence it came.' (Gilson, 1936 393)

6. Dialectic: Hegel and Marx

### 8. Dialectic

The absolute idealism of Hegel leaves logical room for divine action in history, so long as the ultimate Spirit, or *Geist*, is in fact God. History is the unfolding of *Geist's* self-expression, and the growth of *Geist's* self knowledge. In this sense, there is no time when *Geist* is not at work in history. This process is described by Hegel in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (delivered 1834 ff.) and, at a more abstract level, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). The dialectical, or logically reciprocal, relations between the fundamental concepts presupposed by the process are described in the *Science of Logic* (1812-14).

However, it might be doubted that *Geist* is God. *Geist* depends closely on expression in history, in art, religion, politics, for being what it is. The God of the great monotheistic religions, in contrast, is in no way dependent on creation, and creates freely. There is a humanistic Hegel, according to whom *Geist* is the world of everything human: all that would be subtracted if humanity were subtracted from existence. There is a theological Hegel, according to whom humanity is the vehicle of *Geist's* self-determination. Neither version of *Geist* appears to be God. Jacques Maritain's verdict on Hegel is:

'He [Hegel] warped and spoiled the philosophy of history in a pernicious way, because of his effort to re-create history -- as well as the whole cosmos -- as the self-movement through which eternal Reason, that is to say God, actualizes Himself in time (and finally reveals Himself in Hegelian wisdom). Everything had to be deduced from the various oppositions and conflicts of dialectics.' (Maritain, 1957: Ch 1: 5, 1)

Various undialectical, but idealist, philosophies of history are advocated by F. W. J. Schelling (1775-1854), J. G. Fichte (1762-1814), and Benedetto Croce (1866-1952). As in the case of Hegel, whether these allow logical room for divine action depends

on whether the ultimate reality who acts in history can be rightly called 'God'.

The philosophy of history of Karl Marx is atheistic, so rules out divine action. The putative antidote to capitalist exploitation and commodification was, itself, an anti-spiritual materialism. Some might diagnose its historical failure in that. Marx keeps faith with the Enlightenment idea that there is purely secular progress in history, and anything that can be explained can be explained scientifically, even if the science of history is Marxism.

Karl Popper (1902-1994) criticises the philosophies of history of Hegel and Marx as unfalsifiable, and essentially repressive; conducive to totalitarianism. In *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945) and *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957) Popper defends falsifiability as the criterion of science. If a theory is genuinely scientific, it is the sort that admits in principle of falsification, refutation. Indeed, its advocates, if scientists, will attempt to falsify it. Marxism, and Freudianism, do not count as science because they are defended in an *ad hominem* and *ad hoc* way. ("You criticise Marx because of your *bourgeois* class location." "You argue Freud is wrong because you unconsciously repress the uncomfortable truth of Freudianism", etc.) If Popper is right, the claim that there is divine action can only be scientific if it is falsifiable. Notice, Popper does not say that falsifiability is a necessary condition for being meaningful. So, even if the claim that there is divine action is not falsifiable, it is not meaningless on his view.

Hegel (1770-1831)

Phil Hist part of the Philosophy of Spirit

'the real is the rational' already proven by Logic

Reason

Freedom

Self-consciousness

grow and are realised in history

Freedom:

Oriental World: one person is free

Greek World: citizens are free

Roman World: citizens are free

Germanic World: many are free

= progress in history; an Enlightenment idea.

World Historical Individuals

History. The various methods may be ranged under three heads:

I. Original History

II. Reflective History

III. Philosophical History

i. Reason Governs the World

ii. Essential destiny of Reason

(1) The Abstract Characteristics of the Nature of Spirit

- (2) The Means Spirit Uses to Realize Its Idea
- (3) The Embodiment Spirit Assumes - the State
- iii. The Course of the World's History

## Hegel's Philosophy of History

### Analytical Table of Contents

#### Introduction

The subject of this course of Lectures is the Philosophical History of the World.

#### SECTION ONE: Original History

- § 1 They simply transferred what was passing in the world around them, to the realm of representative intellect.
- § 2 The influences that have formed the writer are identical with those which have moulded the events that constitute the matter of his story.
- § 3 What the historian puts into the mouths of orators is an uncorrupted transcript of their intellectual and moral habitudes.
- § 4 Among the ancients, these annalists were necessarily great captains and statesmen.

#### SECTION TWO: Reflective History

- § 5 Reflective history's mode of representation is not really confined by the limits of the time to which it relates.
- 1 Universal History
  - § 6 It is the aim of Universal History to gain a view of the entire history of a people or a country.
  - § 7 History must foreshorten its pictures by abstractions.
- 2 Pragmatical History
  - § 8 Pragmatical History takes the occurrence out of the category of the Past and makes it virtually Present.
- 3 Critical History
  - § 9 In Critical History, it is not history itself that is presented, but a History of History.
  - § 10 Critical History adopts an abstract position; yet forms a transition to the Philosophical History.

#### SECTION THREE: Philosophic History

- § Introduction General Introduction to the Philosophy of History. (alternate translation).
- § 11 Philosophy of History means nothing but the thoughtful consideration of it.
- § 12 Reason is the Sovereign of the World; history therefore, presents us with a

rational process.

§ 13 The World of intelligence and conscious volition is not abandoned to chance, but must show itself in the light of the self-cognisant Idea.

§ 14 Two points of view that concern the generally diffused conviction that Reason rules in the world.

I: Reason Governs World

§ 15 Anaxagoras was the first to enunciate the doctrine that Reason governs the world.

§ 16 That Nature is unchangeably subordinate to universal laws, appears nowise strange to us.

§ 17 Religious holds that the world is not abandoned to chance, but that a Providence controls it.

II The Essential Destiny of Reason

§ 18 The question, what is the ultimate design of the World?

§ 19 Spirit is our substantial object. Our task does not require us to contemplate Nature as a Rational System in itself.

§ 20 The three parts of the Destiny of Reason.

(1) The Abstract Characteristics of the Nature of Spirit

§ 21 As the essence of Matter is Gravity, so, on the other hand, the essence of Spirit is Freedom.

§ 22 Eastern nations knew that one is free; the Greeks and Romans that some are free; whilst we know that all men are free.

§ 23 The final cause of the World, we allege to be Spirit's consciousness of its own freedom.

(2) The Means Spirit Uses to Realise Its Idea

§ 24 The first glance at History convinces us that the actions of men proceed from their needs, their passions, their characters and talents.

§ 25 Aims, principles, &c., have a place in our thoughts, but not yet in the sphere of reality.

§ 26 Nothing great in the World has been accomplished without passion.

§ 27 A State is powerful, when the private interest of its citizens is one with the common interest.

§ 28 The universal Idea exists as the substantial totality of things, and as the abstract essence of free volition.

§ 29 The passions of men are gratified and build up the edifice of human society, for Right and Order.

§ 30 The agent's aims are limited but the agents themselves are intelligent thinking beings.

§ 31 History has to do with those momentous collisions between existing, acknowledged duties, laws, and rights.

§ 32 The particular aims of great historical men involve those large issues which are the will of the World-Spirit..

§ 33 Such individuals had no consciousness of the Idea they were unfolding, but were

practical, political men.

§ 34 They are great men, because they accomplished the needs of the age.

§ 35 A World-historical individual is devoted to the One Aim.

§ 36 It is not the Idea that is exposed to danger. It remains in the background, untouched and uninjured. This may be called the cunning of reason.

§ 37 When speaking of the realisation of great ideals by individuals, the subjective element in them has an infinite right to be consulted..

§ 38 We must not fall into the Litany of Lamentations, that the good and pious often fare ill in the world.

§ 39 The means which the World-Spirit uses for realising its Idea involves the activity of personal existences in whom Reason is present; but still obscure and unknown to them.

(3) The Embodiment Spirit Assumes — the State

§ 40 What is the material in which the Ideal of Reason is wrought out? - Personality itself - human desires - Subjectivity generally.

§ 41 The Idea is the inner spring of action; the State is the actually, existing, realised moral life.

§ 42 The first error is that man is free by nature, but that in society, he must limit this natural freedom.

§ 43 Freedom does not exist as original and natural — it must be first sought out and won.

'[...] if the Hegelian philosophy of history refuses to vouch for the truth – *die Wahrheit* – of the dogma of providence, it undertakes nevertheless to demonstrate its correctness – *die Richtigkeit*.' (Gilson, 1936 394)

'What Hegel [...] offers us is once more a *Discourse on Universal History* [Bossuet] in which the dialectic of reason has taken the place of God.' (Gilson, 1936 394)

'Had Hegel's philosophy of history embraced this age, Hitler's robot bombs would have found their place beside the early death of Alexander and similar images, as one of the selected empirical facts by which the state of the world-spirit manifests itself directly in symbols. Like Fascism itself, the robots career without a subject. Like it they combine utmost technical perfection with total blindness. And like it they arouse mortal terror and are wholly futile. 'I have seen the world spirit', not on horseback, but on wings and without a head, and that refutes, at the same stroke, Hegel's philosophy of history.' (Adorno, 55)

Marx (1818-1883)

‘1. Ideology in General, and Especially German Philosophy

A. We know only a single science, the science of history.

One can look at history from two sides and divide it into the history of nature and the history of men. The two sides are, however, inseparable; the history of nature and the history of men are dependent on each other so long as men exist.

The history of nature, called natural science, does not concern us here; but we will have to examine the history of men, since almost the whole ideology amounts either to a distorted conception of this history or to a complete abstraction from it. Ideology is itself only one of the aspects of this history.'

'The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. Of course, we cannot here go either into the actual physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself – geological, hydrographical, climatic and so on. The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men.'

'Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation.'

'By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.'

#### Ideas:

'The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.'

#### Tribal Ownership:

'The first form of ownership is tribal [Stammeigentum] ownership. It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by the rearing of beasts or, in the highest stage, agriculture. In the latter case it presupposes a great mass of uncultivated stretches of land. The division of labour is at this stage still very elementary and is confined to a further extension of the natural

division of labour existing in the family. The social structure is, therefore, limited to an extension of the family; patriarchal family chieftains, below them the members of the tribe, finally slaves. The slavery latent in the family only develops gradually with the increase of population, the growth of wants, and with the extension of external relations, both of war and of barter.'

#### Communal and State Ownership:

'The second form is the ancient communal and State ownership which proceeds especially from the union of several tribes into a city by agreement or by conquest, and which is still accompanied by slavery. Beside communal ownership we already find movable, and later also immovable, private property developing, but as an abnormal form subordinate to communal ownership. The citizens hold power over their labouring slaves only in their community, and on this account alone, therefore, they are bound to the form of communal ownership. It is the communal private property which compels the active citizens to remain in this spontaneously derived form of association over against their slaves. For this reason the whole structure of society based on this communal ownership, and with it the power of the people, decays in the same measure as, in particular, immovable private property evolves. The division of labour is already more developed. We already find the antagonism of town and country; later the antagonism between those states which represent town interests and those which represent country interests, and inside the towns themselves the antagonism between industry and maritime commerce. The class relation between citizens and slaves is now completely developed.'

#### Feudalism:

'The third form of ownership is feudal or estate property. If antiquity started out from the town and its little territory, the Middle Ages started out from the country. This different starting-point was determined by the sparseness of the population at that time, which was scattered over a large area and which received no large increase from the conquerors. In contrast to Greece and Rome, feudal development at the outset, therefore, extends over a much wider territory, prepared by the Roman conquests and the spread of agriculture at first associated with it. The last centuries of the declining Roman Empire and its conquest by the barbarians destroyed a number of productive forces; agriculture had declined, industry had decayed for want of a market, trade had died out or been violently suspended, the rural and urban population had decreased. From these conditions and the mode of organisation of the conquest determined by them, feudal property developed under the influence of the Germanic military constitution. Like tribal and communal ownership, it is based again on a community; but the directly producing class standing over against it is not, as in the case of the ancient community, the slaves, but the enserfed small peasantry. As soon as feudalism is fully developed, there also arises antagonism to the towns. The hierarchical structure of land ownership, and the armed bodies of retainers

associated with it, gave the nobility power over the serfs.’

### History and Life:

‘We must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to “make history.” But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life.’

### Communism:

‘We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.’

### ‘The Necessity of the Communist Revolution:

Finally, from the conception of history we have sketched we obtain these further conclusions:

(1) In the development of productive forces there comes a stage when productive forces and means of intercourse are brought into being, which, under the existing relationships, only cause mischief, and are no longer productive but destructive forces (machinery and money); and connected with this a class is called forth, which has to bear all the burdens of society without enjoying its advantages, which, ousted from society, is forced into the most decided antagonism to all other classes; a class which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness, which may, of course, arise among the other classes too through the contemplation of the situation of this class.

(2) The conditions under which definite productive forces can be applied are the conditions of the rule of a definite class of society, whose social power, deriving from its property, has its practical-idealistic expression in each case in the form of the State; and, therefore, every revolutionary struggle is directed against a class, which till then has been in power. [4]

(3) In all revolutions up till now the mode of activity always remained unscathed and it was only a question of a different distribution of this activity, a new distribution of labour to other persons, whilst the communist revolution is directed against the preceding mode of activity, does away with labour, and abolishes the rule of all classes with the classes themselves, because it is carried through by the class which no longer counts as a class in society, is not recognised as a class, and is in itself the expression of the dissolution of all classes, nationalities, etc. within present society; and

(4) Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for

the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is, necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.'

#### On 'German Ideology' and Materialism:

'In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.' Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels *The German Ideology* ( ) 1 A

'The ultimate similarity between Marxist and bourgeois optimism, despite the provisional catastrophism of the former, is in fact the most telling proof of the unity of modern culture.' (Niebuhr, 1949 4)

'[...] we may attribute to Marx, as we cannot to Hegel, not only a *philosophy* of history, but also what deserves to be called a *theory* of history' (Cohen, 27)

'[...] central Marxian explanations are functional, which means, *very roughly*, that the character of what is explained is determined by its effect on what explains it.' (Cohen, 278)

Lenin (1870-1924)

Plekhanov (1856-1918)

*The Role of the Individual in History* (1898)

Marxism consistent with causal efficacy of 'the great man' in history.

Great man produced by social forces.

Lukács (1885-1971)

*History and Class Consciousness* 1922 (new, self-critical, Preface 1967)

'in Marx's theory and method the *true method* by which to understand society and history has *finally* been discovered. This method is historical through and through.' (Lukács, 1971 xliii)

'It is self-evident, therefore, that it must be constantly applied to itself' (Lukács, 1971 xliii)

'the Marxist method is equally as much the product of class warfare as any other political or economic product. (Lukács, 1971 21)

'according to this view of Marxist method its pre-eminent aim is *knowledge of the present*.' (Lukács, 1971 xliii)

'Ideologically no less than economically, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are mutually interdependent.' (Lukács, 1971 68)

'It was necessary for the proletariat to be born for social reality to become fully conscious.' (Lukács, 1971 19)

'in the class consciousness of the proletariat theory and practice coincide' (Lukács, 1971 69)

'class consciousness [...] the historically significant actions of the class as a whole are determined in the last resort by this consciousness and not by the thought of the individual.' (Lukács, 1971 51)

'The goal of these arguments is an interpretation, an exposition of Marx's theory as Marx understood it.' (Lukács, 1971 xliii)

'in so far as the 'false' is an aspect of the 'true' it is both 'false' and 'non-false' (Lukács, 1971 xlvii)

'Consciousness does not lie outside the real process of history.' (Lukács, 1971 77)

'The objective theory of class consciousness is the theory of its objective possibility.' (Lukács, 1971 79)

Gramsci (1891-1937)

Sartre (1905-1980)

## 7(a). Positivism

Comte (1798-1857)

*Cours de philosophie positive* 12 vols. (1830-42) *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* ( ) *System of Positive Polity* Vol III ( )

Positivism = thesis that everything is explicable by science

ambiguous between entailing:

'everything is explicable'

and only entailing:

'everything explicable is explicable by sci'

(Logical Positivism)

'Social Dynamics'

history is a science

historical laws

laws discovered empirically: by generalising over examples

Law of the Three Stages

3 stages in human understanding:

(1) 'theological' superstitious, spiritual God: fictitious

(2) 'metaphysical' abstract forces (gravity) Nature: abstract

(3) 'positive', 'scientific' observation, laws are generalisations

x3 stages manifest in human history:

(1) Ancient Greece and Rome, Middle Ages, theological:

fetishism (animism) to polytheism to monotheism.

(2) Renaissance to French Revolution, both metaphysical and critical: science and industry. Breakdown of theology in (1)

(3) Positivist era, science: should be like the middle ages but science replaces Christianity

3 stages are:

(a) necessary

(b) invariable

(b) known by rational proof or by historical test

NB: positivism = search for laws, not first or final causes: ie 'social physics'

'Comte and his "three states" leading up to the religion of humanity, almost makes one think of an Augustine turned atheist, and a City of God brought down from

heaven to earth.' (Gilson, 1936 393)

## 9 Some Twentieth Century Thinkers

In *The Idea of History* (1946) R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943) asks 'What does it mean to understand historically?' His method of 're-enactment' entails that action is essential to History, ideas are essential to action and, therefore, ideas are essential to History. Understanding some historical agent,  $x$ , is thinking thoughts numerically identical to the thoughts of  $x$ . *prima facie* this seems wrong: My thought that  $p$  is now, William the Conqueror's thought that  $p$  is in 1066. But, Collingwood is thinking of thoughts as *essentially* types or thought *contents*. So, understanding  $x$  is thinking thoughts type- identical to the thoughts of  $x$ . The historian succeeds when he thinks *what* the historical agent thinks.

Collingwood does not discuss divine action in *The Idea of History*, but his historical method may be usefully extended to cover it. Suppose there is divine action (for example, miraculous intervention, as described in the Old Testament). In that case, the right method of the historian is, so far as his finite, fallen, mind allows, to think thoughts type-identical to God's intention in acting. The historian has to find the right description under which to subsume the case of divine action, to understand *what* God is doing in acting, to understand the meaning of the miracle..

Collingwood was himself an accomplished historian. See, notably, *The Archaeology of Roman Britain* (volume one of *The Oxford History England*)

The Logical Positivist thinker, Carl Hempel (1905-1997) leaves no room for divine action in his critical philosophy of history. Positivism is the thesis that anything explicable is explicable scientifically. Hempel says that there are 'particular events' and 'general laws which might govern those events' (Hempel, 1949: 459). Given knowledge of initial conditions and boundary conditions, and a law under which an event is subsumed, it ought to be possible to predict that event. Hempel says 'In history, as anywhere else in empirical science, the explanation of a phenomenon consists in subsuming it under general empirical laws' (468) and 'general laws have quite analogous functions in history and in the natural sciences' (459). Indeed, he thinks law 'an indispensable instrument of historical research' (459). For Hempel explanation is predictability, so 'whenever events of the kind described in the first group occur, an event of the kind to be explained will take place'.

One is inclined to object that this kind of explanation fails in history. Notoriously, as historians, we tend *not* to successfully predict wars, revolutions, reforms, technological revolutions, etc. Indeed, the history of attempting to learn from history is dismal. The 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War is a war of movement so, disasterously, the 1914-18 war starts on the same model. The Maginot Line is built in the expectation that the next war will resemble the 1914-18 War, in being essentially static, etc. I suspect that Hempel would say that the reason for these failures is our

inadequate grasp of initial and boundary conditions: If we knew enough about the determining factors, we could predict historical outcomes with certainty. Hempel does not think there is a difficulty about establishing historical laws. He says:

'class struggle, economic or geographic conditions, vested interests of certain groups, tendency to conspicuous consumption, etc.: All of them rest on the assumption of universal hypotheses' (Hempel, 1949: 464)

Indeed, he offers as such a generalisation: 'populations will tend to migrate towards regions which offer better living conditions'(464)

Logical Positivism itself clearly rules out divine action because it is the thesis that any significant claim is either contingent, synthetic, and empirically verifiable, or else necessary, analytic, and *a priori*. That there is divine action falls into the disastrous middle category of synthetic *a priori*, and so is strictly nonsensical.

Although, as a Logical Positivist, Hempel is sure that his philosophy is scientific, he offers a classical, that is, Newtonian, model of scientific explanation. It could be that the subject matter of history is quantum and, like sub-atomic reality, needs quantum explanation. History entails the existence of consciousness, and freedom of choice, and so resists deterministic prediction. In fairness to Hempel, he concedes:

'[...] indeed, it seems possible and justifiable to construe certain explanations offered in history as based on the assumption of probability hypotheses rather than of general "deterministic" laws, i.e., laws in the form of universal conditions' (465)

Zisel argues that all historical laws are statistical (Zisel, 1941)

Jacques Maritain's endorsement of a kind of historical law is, at the same time, reminiscent of Augustine's philosophy of history in *City of God*:

'One of the axiomatic laws [...] is the quite general and simple law according to which wheat and tares grow together in human history. It means that the advance of history is a double and antagonistic movement of ascent and descent. In other words, the advance of history is a two-fold simultaneous progress in good and evil. This is a law of basic importance, it seems to me, if we are trying to interpret human history.' (Maritain, 1957: Ch 1: 3)

But Maritain's Thomism is atypical in twentieth-century philosophy of history. For all the catastrophes of modernity, the Enlightenment theory of history persists at least in the West, as the background assumption upon which global capitalist liberalism rests. Niebuhr says:

'The real alternative to the Christian faith elaborated by modern secular culture was the idea that history is itself Christ, which is to say that history itself is redemptive.' (Niebuhr, 1949: v)

Hempel (1905-)

'The Function of General Laws in History' (JP 39, 1942) (reprinted in Feigl and Sellars, 1949) attacked by William Dray in 'The Historical Explanation of Actions Reconsidered' (Gardiner, 1974 66-89). Hempel replies in "Reasons and Covering Laws in Historical Explanation'. (Gardiner, 1974 90-105)

(1) 'particular events'

(2) 'general laws which might govern those events' (459)

'In history, as anywhere else in empirical science, the explanation of a phenomenon consists in subsuming it under general empirical laws' (468)

'general laws have quite analogous functions in history and in the natural sciences' (459)

'an indispensable instrument of historical research' (459)

'In every case where an event of a specified kind C occurs at a certain place and time, an event of a specified kind E will occur at a place and time which is related in a specified manner to the place and time of the occurrence of the first event.' (459)

x2 sets of statements, expressing 'initial conditions and general laws' (468):

(1) 'C<sub>1</sub>,...C<sub>n</sub> at certain times and places', 'initial and boundary conditions' (460) 'the *determining conditions* for the event to be explained'

(2) 'laws on which the explanation is based', 'whenever events of the kind described in the first group occur, an event of the kind to be explained will take place'

Occurrence of E logically follows from conjunction of (1) and (2)

so E is predictable from the conjunction of (1) and (2)

(i) Predictability of E

(ii) Explanation of E

Predictability of E = explanation of E ?

E is predictable iff E is explained ?

In prediction, C is known and we aim to know E.

In explanation, E is known and we aim to know C.

'the causal analysis of an event consists in establishing an explanation for it' (469)  
(but not *vice versa*)

'quantitative law'

qualitative law

x3 tests:

(a) claims about initial conditions

- (b) claims expressing laws
- (c) logic

'Historical explanation [, too,] aims at showing that the event in question was not a "matter of chance", but was to be expected in view of certain antecedent or simultaneous conditions. The explanation referred to is not prophecy or divination, but rational scientific anticipation which rests on the assumption of general laws.' (463)

'class struggle, economic or geographic conditions, vested interests of certain groups, tendency to conspicuous consumption, etc.: All of them rest on the assumption of universal hypotheses' (464)

'populations will tend to migrate towards regions which offer better living conditions' (464)

Probability:

'[...] indeed, it seems possible and justifiable to construe certain explanations offered in history as based on the assumption of probability hypotheses rather than of general "deterministic" laws, i.e., laws in the form of universal conditions' (465)

Zisel: all historical laws are statistical (Zisel, 1941)

'explanation sketch' historical explanations are incomplete.  
Incomplete knowledge of the initial conditions.  
'empirically meaningless terms' (466)

*Verstehen*:

not sufficient for explanation:

'The method of empathy [...] it does not in itself constitute an explanation: it rather is essentially a heuristic device; its function is to suggest certain psychological hypotheses which might serve as explanatory principles in the case under consideration.' (467)

not necessary for explanation:

'A historian may, for example, be incapable of feeling himself in the rôle of paranoiac historical personality, and yet he may well be able to explain some of his actions; notably by reference to the principles of abnormal psychology.' (467)

Logical Positivism:

(1) 'The interpretations which are actually offered in history consist either in subsuming the phenomena in question under a scientific explanation or explanation sketch; or in an attempt to subsume them under some general idea which is not amenable to any empirical test' (468)

(2) 'In the former case, interpretation is clearly explanation by means of universal hypotheses' (468)

(3) 'in the latter, it amounts to a pseudo-explanation which may have emotive appeal and evoke vivid pictorial associations, but that does not further our theoretical understanding of the phenomena under consideration.' (468)

'historical research has frequently to resort to general laws established in physics, chemistry, and biology. This, e.g., the explanation of the defeat of an army by reference to lack of food, adverse weather conditions, disease, and the like, is based on a – usually tacit – assumption of such laws.' (470)

7(b). Idealism

Schelling ( )

'Schelling's "pantheism", setting out to assure a succession of world-ages – *die Weltalter* – from within, posits, posits a divine immanence at the metaphysical heart of things, and all that history does is to explicate its development through time.' (Gilson, 1936 385)

Fichte ( )

Croce (1866-1952)

*The Theory and History of Historiography* (1915)

*History: Its Theory and Practice* (1916)

*History as the Story of Liberty* (1938)

History an art not a science.

Historian needs the skills of the artist not the scientist

Science:

(1) pragmatic. Sci is useful. Science is conducive to technology.

(2) Scientific claims are neither true nor false (Croce's view is the reverse of Logical Positivism)

(3) Scientific concepts are 'pseudo-concepts'

(4) Science aims at Generality

(5) Science caputes its subect matter in laws.

History:

- (1) unpragmatic
- (2) Historical claims are either true or false
- (3) All true knowledge is historical knowledge
- (4) History and art aim at Particularity
- (5) Historical events cannot be captured by laws.
- (6) Philosophy and History are identical (and understood to be identical when thoroughly understood)
- (7) Historical understanding is a synthesis of the individual and the universal: subsuming individuals under universals.
- (8) The historian 'lives again in imagination individuals and events'

History = the expression of human thought and feeling.

History has an essential 'inwardness'.

Historical concepts have application because of what is common to the mind of the historian and the minds of people in the past. There is a mystical union of the consciousness of the historian and the consciousness of people in the past.

Collingwood (1889-1943)

*The Idea of History* ed. T. M. Knox (1946)

'The historian [...] is investigating not mere events (where by a mere event I mean one which has only an outside and no inside) but actions, and an action is the unity of the outside and inside of an event.' (Collingwood, 1946 214)

'For history, the object to be discovered is not the mere event, but the thought expressed in it' (Collingwood, 1946 214)

'All history is the history of thought.' (Collingwood, 1946 214)

8(a). Some Nineteenth Century Thinkers

Mill (1806-1873)

*System of Logic* (1843)

stages of society

empirical laws

'principles of human nature'

history could be scientific

Buckle (1821-1862)

*History of Civilisation in England* (1857)

Historical laws

laws found by statistical surveys

Human nature varies historically

x2 'dogmas':

1. 'dogma of Free Will' (metaphysics)

2. 'dogma of Predestination' (theology)

1. depends on consciousness of free will so fallible.

2. cannot be known to be true or false.

= x2 obstacles to 'philosophical' ie scientific history so to be given up.

Human beings modify nature

Nature modifies human beings

[Human beings modify each other?]

Technology accounts for the world dominance of Europe.

Technology depends on knowledge.

Tolstoy (1828-1910)

*War and Peace* (1869) esp. 'Second Epilogue'

(1) rejects 'great man' view of history (eg heroic)

(2) rejects historical 'forces' (eg ideological, scientific, social)

both presuppose a muddled and unanalysed notion of *power*.

History falls short of mathematics in precision and explanatory power

'the integration of infinitesimals'

historical events result from the actions of man individuals

History is the life of nations and of humanity. (Ch. I)

'If the purpose of history be to give a description of the movement of humanity and of the peoples, the first question--in the absence of a reply to which all the rest will be incomprehensible--is: what is the power that moves peoples?' (Ch. I)

'The necessity of the conception of power as an explanation of historical events is best demonstrated by the universal historians and historians of culture themselves, for they professedly reject that conception but inevitably have recourse to it at every step.' (Ch. II)

'Napoleon ordered an army to be raised and go to war. We are so accustomed to that idea and have become so used to it that the question: why did six hundred thousand men go to fight when Napoleon uttered certain words, seems to us senseless. He had the power and so what he

ordered was done.

This reply is quite satisfactory if we believe that the power was given him by God. But as soon as we do not admit that, it becomes essential to determine what is this power of one man over others.' (Ch. IV)

'If the source of power lies neither in the physical nor in the moral qualities of him who possesses it, it must evidently be looked for elsewhere--in the relation to the people of the man who wields the power.' (Ch. IV)

'Power is the collective will of the people transferred, by expressed or tacit consent, to their chosen rulers.' (Ch. IV)

'If power be the collective will of the people transferred to their ruler, was Pugachev a representative of the will of the people? If not, then why was Napoleon I? Why was Napoleon III a criminal when he was taken prisoner at Boulogne, and why, later on, were those criminals whom he arrested?' (Ch. IV)

'Do palace revolutions--in which sometimes only two or three people take part--transfer the will of the people to a new ruler? In international relations, is the will of the people also transferred to their conqueror? Was the will of the Confederation of the Rhine transferred to Napoleon in 1806? Was the will of the Russian people transferred to Napoleon in 1809, when our army in alliance with the French went to fight the Austrians?' (Ch. IV)

'To these questions three answers are possible:

Either to assume (1) that the will of the people is always unconditionally transferred to the ruler or rulers they have chosen, and that therefore every emergence of a new power, every struggle against the power once appointed, should be absolutely regarded as an infringement of the real power; or (2) that the will of the people is transferred to the rulers conditionally, under definite and known conditions, and to show that all limitations, conflicts, and even destructions of power result from a nonobservance by the rulers of the conditions under which their power was entrusted to them; or (3) that the will of the people is delegated to the rulers conditionally, but that the conditions are unknown and indefinite, and that the appearance of several authorities, their struggles and their falls, result solely from the greater or lesser fulfillment by the rulers of these unknown conditions on which the will of the people is transferred from some

people to others.' (Ch. IV)

'And these are the three ways in which the historians do explain the relation of the people to their rulers.' (Ch. IV)

Second Epilogue to *War and Peace* (Ch. I-IV)

Bradley

'The Presuppositions of Critical History' (1874) reprinted in his *Collected Essays* Vol 1 ( )

Gunkel

(1862- )

Ranke ( )

'the announcement of scientific history in 1824 by Ranke, who suggested that the historian's task is not to teach lessons or pass judgments, but simply to investigate how things happen.' (Bury, 1958 259)

## 8(b). Some Twentieth Century Thinkers

Benjamin (1892-1940)

'History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now.' (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 259)

'In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of an irresistible decay.' (Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* 177)

Dilthey (1833-1911)

*The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (1911)

Free methods of history and social science from:

(a) metaphysics

(b) natural sciences

both = mistakes (Dilthey, 1944 110)

Understanding (*Verstehen*)

a faculty

a process

All physical actions are expressions of mental states

*Verstehen* is the attribution of the right mental states to the right actions.

'Understanding is a rediscovery of the I in the Thou' (Dilthey, 1944 114)

'The knowing subject is here one with its object' (Dilthey, 1944 114)

'by this procedure we come to recognize the objectivity of the world of mind built up in the subject's consciousness' (Dilthey, 1944 114)

'a projection of the self into a person or a work.' (Dilthey, 1944 121)

x3 kinds of expression

(1) 'Judgements'

(2) 'Actions'

(3) 'Expressions of Experience'

Expressions are revelatory of 'Life-Structure' or mind in the broadest sense.

'expression wells up out of the soul immediately, without reflection'

(Dilthey, 1944 118)

x2 kinds of *Verstehen*:

(1) elementary (individual)

(2) higher (orders findings of (1) into types)

Hermeneutics

The understanding of understanding

Present reconstruction of past mentalities

Order of sci = effect to cause (backwards)

Hermeneutic order = order in which events happened (forwards)

'What is the system of principles which underlies alike the historian's judgment, the economist's conclusions, and the jurist's conceptions, and makes it possible to determine their weight?' (Dilthey, 1944 112)

'Nowhere but in inner experience, in the facts of consciousness, did I find a firm anchorage for my thought' (Dilthey, 1944 112)

'the epistemological standpoint' (Dilthey, 1944 113):

=Kantian view.

(1) 'All knowledge is knowledge of experience' (Dilthey, 1944 112) (empiricist)

(2) 'but the original unity of all experience and its resulting validity are conditioned by the factors which mould the consciousness within which it arises, i.e., by the the whole of our nature.' (rationalist) (Dilthey, 1944 112-113)

(3) 'the impossibility of going beyond these conditions'

(4) '[the impossibility of] seeing as it were without an eye or directing the gaze of knowledge behind the eye itself'

(5) 'from this standpoint the independence of the human studies finds a foundation'

'the human studies form an independent system by themselves'

(6) 'from this standpoint our view of the whole natural world turns out to be a mere

shadow cast by a reality hidden from us'

(7) 'it is only in the facts of consciousness given in inner experience that we possess reality as it is' (Dilthey, 1944 113)

(8) 'in knowing the principles which govern the world of the mind we remain within that world' (Dilthey, 1944 113)

'Kant [...] the question is, whether an epistemology of history, which he himself has not furnished, is possible within the framework of his ideas.' (Dilthey, 1944 114-115)

Laws:

'our task is to get to know the laws which govern social, intellectual, and moral phenomena.' (Dilthey, 1944 115)

'association'

'combination'

'reproduction'

'apperception' (Dilthey, 1944 116)

'uniformities', 'inferred regularities' & 'rules of dependence'

'objective mind':

'the manifold forms in which the common background subsisting among various individuals has objectified itself in the sensible world' (Dilthey, 1944 118)

'In this objective mind the past is for us a permanent and enduring present.'  
(Dilthey, 1944 118)

'Objective mind and the power of the individual together determine the world of mind. History rests on the understanding of both.' (Dilthey, 1944 120)

analogy between understanding history and reading a poem:

'every line of the poem is changed back into life by the inner system in lived experience, from which the poem takes its origin.' (Dilthey, 1944 121)

*Das Leben*

Life. A totality of actions and the mental states that cause them.

*Der Geist*

Spirit, mind. What would be subtracted from reality if human consciousness were subtracted.

*Verhaltung*

Attitude. The relation between consciousness and what consciousness is consciousness of.

*Das Erleben, das Erlebnis*

the lived through. States as had or undergone, rather than as objects of reflection.

*Bedeutung*

meaning. reference. referent. unit of historical study. eg 'the French Revolution', 'the mind of Robespierre'. What written history essentially refers to.

*Bedeutsamkeit*

meaningfulness. significance. a historical part (both 'part' as in 'role' and 'part' as in 'part of a whole')

*Sinn*

sense. The pattern of a historical whole (or unit or *Bedeutung*)

*Das Nacherleben*

re-living. The historian's having thoughts qualitatively similar to those of persons in the past.

*Das Nachbilden*

reproduction. picturing afterwards. The historian's having mental images of the past, especially as it appeared to past people.

*Weltanschauung*

world view. world picture. includes an answer to the riddle of life.

*Das metaphysische Bewusstsein*

metaphysical consciousness. consciousness of the riddle of life. the understanding of metaphysical questions.

Spencer

Spengler (1880-1936)

*The Decline of the West* Vol I (1911), Vol II (1922)

Historical change driven by basic oppositions:

- (1) Destiny against Causality
- (2) Culture against Civilisation
- (3) History against Nature
- (4) Growth against Decay
- (5) Life against Death

Spengler thinks his own time is entering the age of 'Caesarism'.

'morphological' theory of history:

emergence and dissolution of cultures

c. 1000 years = lifespan of a culture

culture's 'life' analogous to that of a plant

each culture has a 'soul'; mentality, consciousness

x8 cultures have existed  
each passes through  
growth  
civilisation  
decline  
Egyptian  
Chinese  
Ancient Semitic  
Indian  
Magian  
Apollonian (Greco-Roman or 'Classical')  
Faustian (West over last c.1000 years)  
The Faustian has passed the 'civilisation' phase and is now in decline.

Misleading to divide history into  
Ancient  
Medieval  
Modern  
acc. to Spengler. = a falsifying picture.  
Each culture is distinctive.

Epistemology:  
There is no universal or absolute truth  
Truth is truth within a culture

Ontology  
(1) Nature is the world of 'the become'  
(2) History is the world of 'becoming'

History is not a science  
Sci characterised essentially by:  
(1) discovery of causal uniformity  
(2) use of measurement  
Both apply to nature but not to history.  
History requires 'insight'.  
Sci is quantitative  
History is qualitative  
Sci is mechanical  
History is study of living variety and flux  
Sci is inductive  
History creatively reconstructs the inner life and 'meaning' of a culture.

Spengler says he is largely influenced by Goethe and Nietzsche.

Heidegger

Niebuhr

*Faith and History* (1949)

illusion of progress:

'But the fact that history contains such developments as progress in the lethal efficacy of our means of destruction and the increasing consistency of tyrannical governments must prove the vanity of our hope in historical development as such.'

(Niebuhr, 1949 12)

historical lag:

'One of the most potent causes of historical evil is the inability of men to bring their customs and institutions into conformity with new situations.' (Niebuhr, 1949 2)

eg:

(1) 'Political institutions, developed in a pastoral society, maintain themselves stubbornly in an agrarian economy'

(2) 'agrarian institutions are projected into a commercial age'

(3) 'the sometimes extravagant individualism of the commercial age is not an adequate social philosophy for the intense social cohesion of a new industrial age'

(Niebuhr, 1949 12-13)

(4) 'the national sovereignties of the past must be abridged to permit the growth of international political institutions consonant with the economic interdependence of modern nations.' (Niebuhr, 1949 13)

anti-positivism:

'The modern belief that "scientific objectivity" may be simply extended from the field of nature to the field of history obscures the unity of the self which acts, and is acted upon in history.' (Niebuhr, 1949 13-14)

'the ambiguity of the human self;'

'the self as the creature of history is the same self which must be the creator of history.' (Niebuhr, 1949 14)

(A) Classical view of history:

'All of history is subject to the cycle of birth and death, of growth and decay.'

'No special meaning can be assigned to the unique achievements of any individual life or culture.' (Niebuhr, 1949 119)

(B) Modern view of history:

'Modern culture on the other hand comprehends the meaning of history too positively as an endless development of human power and wisdom.' (Niebuhr, 1949 119)

'The real alternative to the Christian faith elaborated by modern secular culture was the idea that history is itself Christ, which is to say that history itself is redemptive.' (Niebuhr, 1949 v)

'It is important in our age to understand how the spiritual complacency of a culture which believed in redemption through history is now on the edge of despair.' (Niebuhr, 1949 v)

(C) Biblical view of history:

'divine creation is both the fulfilment and the negation of intelligibility for the whole temporal order.' (Niebuhr, 1949 115)

Bultmann

*History and Eschatology* (1957)

Toynbee (1889- )

*A Study of History* 10 vols. (1934-)

(1) Comparative study of rise and fall of civilisations

(2) Civilisation is the 'unit' of history

(3) 21 civilisations

(4) Common features of rise and fall of civilisations allows identification of laws

(5) Procedure entirely empirical (Toynbee distances himself from Spengler who he regards as proceeding *a priori*.) vols I-V

(6) Procedure metaphysical vols VI-X History is tending towards a synthesis of the four 'higher religions'.

(7) Blurs distinction between doing history and doing philosophy of history: does philosophical history

(8) Studies history as a whole: past, present and future.

(9) 'the prospects of western civilisation'

'challenge and response'

withdrawal and return'

Hellenism (Greece *and* Rome for Toynbee) = case study

Original project was comparison of decline of Hellenism with the West in the C20<sup>th</sup>.

Maritain

### Good and Evil:

'One of the axiomatic laws [...] is the quite general and simple law according to which wheat and tares grow together in human history. It means that the advance of history is a double and antagonistic movement of ascent and descent. In other words, the advance of history is a two-fold simultaneous progress in good and evil. This is a law of basic importance, it seems to me, if we are trying to interpret human history.' Jacques Maritain *Philosophy of History* ( ) Ch 1:3

'If we meditate on the simple notion of a rational animal, we find that progress toward good -- some kind of progress toward good -- is implied in the very concept of reason. Reason is by itself essentially progressive. Therefore, a being endowed with reason must necessarily, in some way or other, be progressive, not immutable, and progressive in the sense of progressing toward improvement, toward good. But, on the other hand, the notion of progress toward evil is implied in the essential weakness of a rational being which is an animal.' Jacques Maritain *Philosophy of History* ( ) Ch 1:3

### The Hegelian Delusion:

5.1 'He [Hegel] warped and spoiled the philosophy of history in a pernicious way, because of his effort to re-create history -- as well as the whole cosmos -- as the self-movement through which eternal Reason, that is to say God, actualizes Himself in time (and finally reveals Himself in Hegelian wisdom). Everything had to be deduced from the various oppositions and conflicts of dialectics.' Jacques Maritain *Philosophy of History* ( ) Ch 1: 5, 1

'Is any Philosophy of History possible?'

Jacques Maritain *Philosophy of History* ( ) Ch 1:1

'We have a first great example of such a philosophy in St. Augustine's City of God. Here we are given an interpretation of human history in the perspective of Christianity -- an interpretation that opposed the oriental conceptions of the eternally recurrent phases of destruction and regeneration of the cosmos. Christianity has taught us that history has a direction, that it works in a determined direction. History is not an eternal return; it does not move in circles. Time is linear, not cyclical. This truth was a crucial acquisition for human thought.' Jacques Maritain *Philosophy of History* ( ) Ch 1:1

'St. Augustine's philosophy of history was a work of wisdom, both of theology and of philosophy, and more of theology. But in the mind of St. Augustine both wisdoms, the philosophical and the theological, worked together. And his City of God attempts

to bring out the intelligible and, so to speak, trans-historical meaning of history, the intelligible meaning of the sequence or development of events in time. This is precisely the general object of the philosophy of history.' Jacques Maritain *Philosophy of History* ( ) Ch 1:1

Popper (1902-)

*The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945)

*The Poverty of Historicism* (1957)

'Prediction and Prophecy in the Social Sciences' in Patrick Gardiner (ed.) *Theories of History* (The Free Press, New York, 1959) pp. 276-285

Criticises 'Historicism' ie the conjunction of:

(1) 'the doctrine that it is the task of the social sciences to propound historical prophecies' (Popper, 1959 276)

(2) 'historical prophecies are needed if we wish to conduct politics in a rational way' (Popper, 1959 276)

'historicism – the view that the story of mankind has a plot, and that if we can succeed in unravelling this plot, we shall hold the key to the future,' (Popper, 1959 278)

Marxism claims:

(1) 'to be a science'

(2) 'to be progressive'

(3) 'that it adopts the methods of prediction which the natural sciences practice' (Popper, 1959 277)

(3)

'this claim is not justified'

'the kind of prophecies which Marxism offers are in their logical character more akin to those of the Old Testament than to those of modern physics' (Popper, 1959 277)

'the central ideas of the historicist method'

(a) 'it should be possible to predict revolutions just as it is possible to predict solar eclipses'

(b) 'the task of the social sciences is fundamentally the same as that of the natural sciences – to make predictions' = 'the *historicist doctrine of social science*'

(c) 'Once these predictions are available, the task of politics can be determined. It is to lessen the “birthpangs” (as Marx calls them) unavoidably connected with the political developments which have been predicted as impending.' (Popper, 1959 277) = 'the *historicist doctrine of politics*'

Historicists (eg):

Old Testament, Heraclitus, Hesiod, Plato, Hegel, Comte, Mill, Marx

'untenable' (Popper, 1959 278)

distinguish:

(1) 'scientific prediction'

(2) 'unconditional historical prophecies'  
distinction not drawn by historicists.

Why is scientific prediction not possible in history and social science?

'the most striking aspects of historical development are non-repetitive. Conditions are changing, and situations arise (for example, in consequence of new scientific discoveries) which are very different from anything that ever happened before.'  
(Popper, 1959 280)

x2 mistaken theories

(1) 'the theory that the social sciences study the behaviour of social wholes, such as groups, nations, classes, societies, civilizations, etc. These social wholes are conceived of as the empirical objects the social sciences study in the same way in which biology studies animals or plants.' (Popper, 1959 281) = '*naïve collectivism*'

(2) 'It is the view that whatever happens in society – including things which people as a rule dislike, such as war, unemployment, poverty, shortages – are the results of a direct design by some powerful individuals or groups' = '*the conspiracy theory of society*' (Popper, 1959 281)

'the main task of the theoretical social sciences. It is to trace the unintended social repercussions of intentional human actions.' (Popper, 1959 281)

Berlin (1909- )

Brown

Barthes (1915-1980)

'What History, our History, allows us today is merely to displace, to vary, to transcend, to repudiate. Just as Einsteinian science compels us to include within the within the object studied the *relativity of reference points*, so the combined action of Marxism, Freudianism, and structuralism compels us, in literature, to relativize the relations of *scriptor*, reader, and observer (critic). Confronting the *work* – a traditional notion, long since, and still today, conceived in what we might call a Newtonian fashion – there now occurs the demand for a new object, obtained by a shift or a reversal of previous categories. This object is the *Text*.' (Barthes, *The Rustle of Language* 56)

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E. Zilsel 'Problems of Empiricism' *International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science* Vol. II 8

HISTORY FROM A THEORETICAL STANDPOINT

Zilsel: all historical laws are statistical.

'this power of one man over others.' Tolstoy (WP Ch. IV)

E. Zilsel 'Physics and the Problem of Historico-Sociological Laws' *Philosophy of Science* Vol. 8 1941 pp 567-579

QUANTUM HISTORY

QUANTUM SOCIOLOGY

Stephen Priest studied at the University of Cambridge and taught at the University of Oxford.

Stephen Priest is a member of Wolfson College Oxford and Hughes Hall Cambridge.

Stephen Priest is a member of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Oxford.

TRINITY 2014

LECTURES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Thursdays 2.00-3.00, the aula, Blackfriars Hall

Stephen Priest

- 1 Critical and Speculative Philosophy of History
- 2 Ancient Greek Historiography
- 3 Irenaeus, Origen, Augustine
- 4 Medieval views of History
- 5 The Enlightenment
- 6 Hegel
- 7 Marx
- 8 Some Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Thinkers

READING

FIRST WEEK

- 1 Critical and Speculative Philosophy of History
- Berkhofer, Robert F. *Beyond the great story: history as text and discourse*. (Harvard University Press, 1995)
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Three critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder*, (2000)
- Isaiah Berlin *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (London, 1953)
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- White, Hayden V. *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory, 1957-2007*. (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). Ed. Robert Doran

SECOND WEEK

- 2 Ancient Greek Historiography
- Herodotus *Histories* (Penguin)
- Livy *History of Rome* (Penguin or Loeb)
- Polybius *Histories* (Loeb)
- Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* (Penguin)

THIRD WEEK

3 Irenaeus, Origen, Augustine

Augustine *City of God* (Penguin)

Arquillière, H.X. [1934, 1956] *L'Augustinisme politique, essai sur la formation des théories politiques du Moyen Âge*. Paris: Vrin.

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#### FOURTH WEEK

4 Medieval views of History

Aquinas *Summa Theologica* (Blackfriars)

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Ullmann, Walter. [1974] *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages*. London, Methuen.

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#### FIFTH WEEK

##### 5 The Enlightenment

Berlin, Isaiah, 2000. *Three critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder*, H. Hardy (ed.), Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Condorcet, Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat, 1795. *Sketch for a historical picture of the progress of the human mind*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979

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