

An Essay on Man, Chapter 10 – History Ernst Cassirer

After all the various and divergent definitions of the nature of man which had been given in the history of philosophy, modern philosophers were often led to the conclusion that the very question is in a sense misleading and contradictory. In our modern world, says Ortega y Gasset, we are experiencing a breakdown of the classical, the Greek theory of being and, accordingly, of the classical theory of man.

"Nature is a thing, a great thing that is composed of many lesser things. Now, whatever be the differences between things, they all have one basic feature in common, which consists simply in the fact that things *are*, they have their being. And this signifies not only that they exist, that they are, in front of us, but also that they possess a given, fixed structure or consistency.... An alternative expression is the word 'nature.' And the *task* of natural science is to penetrate beneath changing appearances to that permanent nature or texture.... To-day we know that all the marvels of the natural sciences, inexhaustible though they be in principle, must always come to a full stop before the strange reality of human life. Why? If all things have given up a large part of their secret to physical science, why *does* this alone hold *out* so stoutly? The explanation must go deep, down to the roots. Perchance it is no less than this: that man is not a thing, that it is false to talk of human nature, that man has no nature Human life ... is not a thing, has not a nature, and in consequence we must make up our minds to think of it in terms and categories and concepts that will be *radically* different from such as shed light on the phenomena of matter . . ." Till now our logic has been a logic of being, based upon the fundamental concepts of Eleatic thought. But with these concepts we can never hope to understand the distinctive character of man. Eleaticism was the radical intellectualization of human life. It is time we break out of this magic circle. "In order to speak of man's being we must first elaborate non-Eleatic concept of being, as others have elaborated a non Euclidean geometry. The time has come for the seed sown by Heraclitus to bring forth its mighty harvest." Having learned to immunize ourselves against intellectualism we are now conscious of a liberation from naturalism. "*Man has no nature, what he has is history.*"¹

The conflict between being and becoming, which in Plato's *Theaetetus* is described as the fundamental theme of Greek philosophical thought, is, however, not resolved if we pass from the world of nature to the world of history. Since Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* we conceive the dualism between being and becoming as a logical rather than a metaphysical dualism. We no longer speak of a world of absolute change as opposed to another world of absolute rest. We do not regard substance and change as different realms of being but as categories-as conditions and presuppositions of our empirical knowledge. These categories are universal principles; they are not confined to special objects of knowledge. We must therefore expect to find them in all forms of human experience. As a matter of fact even the world of history cannot be understood and interpreted in terms of mere change. This world too includes a substantial element, an element of being-not, however, to be defined in the same sense as in the physical world. Without this element we could scarcely speak, as does Ortega y Gasset, of history as a system. A system always presupposes, if not an identical nature, at least an identical structure. As a matter of fact this structural identity-an identity of form, not of matter-has always been emphasized by the great historians. They have told us that man has a history *because* he has a nature. Such was the judgment of the, historians of the Renaissance, for instance, of Machiavelli, and many modern historians have upheld this

¹ Ortega y Gasset, "History as a System" in *Philosophy and History, Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, pp. 293, 294, 300, 305, 313.

view. Beneath the temporal flux and behind the polymorphism of human life they have hoped to discover the constant features of human nature. In his *Thoughts on World History* Jakob Burckhardt defined the task of the historian as an attempt to ascertain the constant, recurrent, typical elements, because such elements as these can evoke a resonant echo in our intellect and feelings.²

What we call "historical consciousness" is a very late product of human civilization. It is not to be found before the time of the great Greek historians. And even the Greek thinkers were still unable to offer a philosophical analysis of the specific form of historical thought. Such an analysis did not appear until the eighteenth century. The concept of history first reaches maturity in the work of Vico and Herder. When man first became cognizant of the problem of time, when he was no longer confined within the narrow circle of his immediate desires and needs, when he began to inquire into the origin of things, he could find only a mythical, not a historical origin. In order to understand the world-the physical world as well as the social world-he had to project it upon the mythical past. In myth we find the first attempts to ascertain a chronological order of things and events, to give a cosmology and a genealogy of gods and men. But this cosmology and genealogy do not signify a historical distinction in the proper sense. The past, present, and future are still tied lip together; they form an undifferentiated unity and an indiscriminate whole. Mythical time has no definite structure; it is still an "eternal time." From the point of view of the mythical consciousness the past has never passed away; it is always here and now. When man begins to unravel the complex web of the mythical imagination he feels himself transported into a new world; he begins to form a new concept of truth.

We can follow the individual stages of this process when studying the development of Greek historical thought from Herodotus to Thucydides. Thucydides is the first thinker to see and describe the history of his own times and to look back at the past with a clear and critical mind. And he is aware of the fact that this is a new and decisive step. He is convinced that the clear discrimination between mythical and historical thought, between legend and truth, is the characteristic feature which will make his work an "everlasting possession."³ Other great historians have felt similarly. In an autobiographical sketch Ranke tells how he first became aware of his mission as a historian. As a youth he was very much attracted by the romantic historical writings of Walter Scott. He read them with a lively sympathy, but he also took offense at some points. He was shocked when he found that the description of the conflict I between Louis XI and Charles the Bold was in flagrant contradiction with the historical facts. "I studied Commines and the contemporary reports which are attached to the editions of this author and became convinced that a Louis XI and a Charles the Bold, as they are described in Scott's *Quentin Durward*, had never existed. In this comparison I found that the historical evidence was more beautiful and, at any rate, more interesting than all romantic fiction. I turned away from it and resolved to avoid all invention and fabrication in my works and stick to the facts."⁴

To define historical truth as "concordance with the facts" - *adaequatio res et intellectus* - is however no satisfactory solution of the problem. It begs the question instead of solving it. That history has to begin with facts and that, in a sense, these facts are not only the beginning but the end, the alpha and omega of our historical knowledge, is undeniable. But

² Jakob Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, ed. by Jakob Oeri (Berlin and Stuttgart, 1905), p. 4. English ed. by James Hastings Nichols, *Force and Freedom; reflections on History* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1943), p. 82.

³ *ktēma es aei*, Thucydides, *De bello Peloponnesiaco*, I, 22.

⁴ Ranke, "Aufsätze zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte" (November, 1885), in "Sammtliche Werke," ed. A. Dove, LIII, 61.

what is a historical fact? All factual truth implies theoretical truth." ⁵ When we speak of facts we do not simply refer to our immediate sense data. We are thinking of empirical, that is to say objective, facts. This objectivity is not given; it always implies an act and a complicated process judgment. If we wish to know the difference between scientific facts-between the facts of physics, of biology, of history-we must, therefore, always begin with an analysis of judgments. We must study the modes of knowledge by which these facts are accessible.

What makes the difference between a physical fact and a historical fact? Both are regarded as parts of one empirical reality; to both we ascribe objective truth. But if we wish to ascertain the nature of this truth, we proceed in different ways. A physical fact is determined by observation and experiment. This process of objectification attains its end if we succeed in describing the given phenomena in mathematical language, in the language of numbers. A phenomenon which cannot be so described, which is not reducible to a process of measurement, is not a part of our physical world. Defining the task of physics Max Planck says that the physicist has to measure all measurable things and to render all unmeasurable things measurable. Not all physical things or processes are immediately measurable; in many, if not most, cases we are dependent on indirect methods of verification and measurement. But the physical facts are always related by causal laws to other phenomena which are directly observable or measurable. If a physicist is in doubt about the results of an experiment he can repeat and correct it. He finds his objects present at every moment, ready to answer his questions. But with the historian the case is different. His facts belong to the past, and the past is gone forever. We cannot reconstruct it; we cannot waken it to a new life in a mere physical, objective sense. All we can do is to "remember" it-give it a new ideal existence. Ideal reconstruction, not empirical observation, is the first step in historical knowledge. What we call a scientific fact is always the answer to a scientific question which we have formulated beforehand. But to what can the historian direct this question? He cannot confront the events themselves, and he cannot enter into the forms of a former life. He has only an indirect approach to his subject matter. He must consult his sources. But these sources are not physical things in the usual sense of this term. They all imply a new and specific moment. The historian, like the physicist, lives in material world. Yet what he finds at the very beginning of his research is not a world of physical objects but a symbolic universe-a world of symbols. He must, first of all, learn to read these symbols. Any historical fact, however simple it may appear, can only be determined and understood by such a previous analysis of symbols. Not things or events but documents or monuments are the first and immediate objects of our historical knowledge. Only through the mediation and intervention of these symbolic data can we grasp the real historical data-the events and the men of the past.

Before entering into a general discussion of the problem I should like to clarify this point by reference to a specific concrete example. About thirty five years ago an old Egyptian papyrus was found in Egypt under the debris of a house. It contained several inscriptions which seemed to be the notes of a lawyer or public notary concerning his business-drafts of testaments, legal contracts, and so on. Up to this point the papyrus belonged simply to the material world; it had no historical importance, and, so to speak, no historical existence. But a second text was then discovered under the first which after a closer examination could be recognized as the remnants of four hitherto unknown comedies of Menander. At this moment the nature and significance of the codex changed completely. Here was no longer a mere "piece of matter"; this papyrus had become a historical document of the highest value and interest. It bore witness to an important stage in the development of Greek literature. Yet this

⁵ "Das Hochste ware: zu begreifen, das alles Faktische schon Theorie ist." Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*, p. 125.

significance was not immediately obvious. The codex had to be submitted to all sorts of critical *tests*, to careful linguistic, philological, literary, and aesthetic analysis. After this complicated process it was no longer a mere thing; it was charged with meaning. It had become a symbol, and this symbol gave us new insight into Greek culture-into Greek life and Greek poetry.⁶

All this seems obvious and unmistakable. But, curiously enough, precisely this fundamental characteristic of historical knowledge has been entirely overlooked in most of our modern discussions of historical method and historical truth. Most writers looked for the difference between history and science in the *logic*, not in the *object* of history. They took the greatest pains to construct a new logic of history. But all these attempts were doomed to failure. For logic is, after all, a very simple and uniform thing. It is one because truth is one. In his quest of truth the historian is bound to the same formal rules as the scientist. In his modes of reasoning and arguing, in his inductive inferences, in his investigation of causes, he obeys the same general laws of thought as a physicist or biologist. So far as these fundamental theoretical activities of the human mind are concerned we can make no discrimination between the different fields of knowledge. As regards this problem we must subscribe to the words of Descartes: "The sciences taken all together are identical with human wisdom, which always remains one and the same, however applied to different subjects, and suffers no more differentiation proceeding from them than the light of the sun experiences from the variety of the things which it illumines."⁷

No matter how heterogeneous the objects of human knowledge may be, the forms of knowledge always show an inner unity and a logical homogeneity. Historical and scientific thought are distinguishable not by their logical form but by their objectives and subject matter. If we wanted to describe this distinction it would not be enough to say that the scientist has to do with present objects whereas the historian has to do with past objects. Such a distinction would be misleading. The scientist may very well, like the historian, inquire into the remote origin of things. Such an attempt, for instance, was made by Kant. In 1755 Kant developed an astronomical theory which also became a universal history of the material world. He applied the new method of physics, the Newtonian method, to the solution of a historical problem. In so doing he developed the nebular hypothesis by which he tried to describe the evolution of the present cosmic order from a former undifferentiated and unorganized state of matter. This was a problem of natural history, but it was not history in the specific sense of the term. History does not aim to disclose a former state of the physical world but rather a former stage of human life and human culture. For the solution of this problem it can make use of scientific methods, but it cannot restrict itself only to the data available by these methods. No object whatever is exempt from the laws of nature. Historical objects have no separate and self-contained reality; they are embodied in physical objects. But in spite of this embodiment they belong, so to speak, to a higher dimension. What we call the historic sense does not change the shape of things, nor does it detect in them a new quality. But it does give to things and events a new depth. When the scientist wishes to go back into the past he employs no concepts or categories but those of his observations of the present. He connects the present with the past by following backward the chain of causes and effects. He studies in the present the material traces left by the past. This is, for instance, the method of geology or palaeontology. History too has to begin with these traces, for without

⁶ For details of this discovery see Gustave Lefebvre, *Fragments d'un manuscrit de Menandre, decouverts et publies* (LeCaire, Impression de l'Institut Francais d'Archeologie. 1907).

⁷ Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, I, "Oeuvres," ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris, 1897), X, 360. English trans. by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross. "The Philosophical Works of Descartes" (Cambridge University Press, 1911), I, 1.

them it could not take a single step. But this is only a first and preliminary task. To this actual, empirical reconstruction history adds a symbolic reconstruction. The historian must learn to read and interpret his documents and monuments not only as dead remnants of the past but as living, messages from it, messages addressing us in a language of their own. The symbolic content of these messages is, however, not immediately observable. It is the work of the linguist, the philologist, and the historian to make them speak and to make us understand their language. Not in the logical structure of historical thought but in this special task, in this special mandate, consists the fundamental distinction between the works of the historian and the geologist or palaeontologist. If the historian fails to decipher the symbolic language of his monument history remains to him a sealed book. In a certain sense the historian is much more of a linguist than a scientist. But he not only studies the spoken and written languages of mankind; he tries to penetrate into the sense of all the various symbolic idioms. He finds his texts not merely in books, in annals or memoirs. He has to read hieroglyphs or cuneiform inscriptions, look at colours on a canvas, at statues in marble or bronze, at cathedrals or temples, at coins or gems. But he does not consider all these things simply with the mind of an antiquary who wishes to collect and preserve the treasures of olden times. What the historian is in search of is rather the materialization of the spirit of a former age. He detects the same spirit in laws and statutes, in charters and bills of right, in social institutions and political constitutions, in religious rites and ceremonies. To the true historian such material is not petrified fact but living form. History is the attempt to fuse together all these *disjecta membra*, the scattered limbs of the past and to synthesize them and mould them into new shape.

Among the modern founders of a philosophy of history Herder had the clearest insight into this side of the historical process. His works give us not merely a recollection but a resurrection of the past. Herder was no historian in the proper sense. He has left us no great historical work. And even his philosophical achievement is not to be compared with the work of Hegel. Nevertheless, he was the pioneer of a new ideal of historical truth. Without him the work of Ranke or Hegel would not have been possible. For he possessed the great personal power of revivifying the past, of imparting an eloquence to all the fragments and remnants of man's moral, religious, and cultural life. It was this feature of Herder's work which aroused the enthusiasm of Goethe. As he wrote in one of his letters, he did not find in Herder's historical descriptions the mere "husk and shell of human beings." What excited his profound admiration was Herder's "manner of sweeping-not simply sifting-gold out of the rubbish, but regenerating the rubbish itself to a living plant." ⁸

It is this "palingenesis," this rebirth of the past, which marks and distinguishes the great historian. Friedrich Schlegel called the historian *einen ruckwärts gekehrten Propheten*, a retrospective prophet. ⁹ There is also a prophecy of the past, a revelation of its hidden life. History cannot predict the events to come; it can only interpret the past. But human life is an organism in which all elements imply and explain each other. Consequently a new understanding of the past gives us at the same time a new prospect of the future, which in turn becomes an impulse to intellectual and social life. For this double view of the world in prospect and in retrospect the historian must select his point of departure. He cannot find it except in his own time. He cannot go beyond the conditions of his present experience. Historical knowledge is the answer to definite questions, an answer which must be given by

⁸ "Deine Art zu fegen-und nicht etwa aus dem Kehrlicht Gold zu sieben, sondern den Kehrlicht zur lebendigen Pflanze umzupalingenesieren, legt mich immer auf die Knie meines Herzens." Goethe an Herder, May 1775, Briefe (Weimar ed.), II, 262.

⁹ "Athenaumsfragmente," 80, op. cit., II, 215.

the past; but the questions themselves are put and dictated by the present-by our present intellectual interests and our present moral and social needs.

This connection between present and past is undeniable; but we may draw from it very different conclusions concerning the certainty and value of historical knowledge. In contemporary philosophy Croce is the champion of the most radical "historicism." To him history is not merely a special province but the whole of reality. His thesis that all history is contemporary history leads, therefore, to a complete identification of philosophy and history. Above and beyond the human realm of history there is no other realm of being, no other subject matter for philosophical thought.¹⁰ The opposite inference was drawn by Nietzsche. He, too, insisted that "we can only explain the past by what is highest in the present." But this assertion served him only as a starting point for a violent attack on the value of history. In his "Thoughts out of Season," with which he began his work as a philosopher and as a critic of modern culture, Nietzsche challenged the so-called "historic sense" of our times. He tried to prove that this historic sense, far from being a merit and privilege of our cultural life, is its intrinsic danger. It is a malady from which we suffer. History has no meaning except as the servant of life and action. If the servant usurps the power, if he sets us as the master, he obstructs the energies of life. By excess of history our life has become maimed and degenerate. It hinders the mighty impulse to new deeds and paralyzes the doer. For most of us can only do if we forget. The unrestricted historic sense pushed to its logical extreme uproots the future.¹¹ But this judgment depends on Nietzsche's artificial discrimination between the life of action and the life of thought. When Nietzsche made this attack he was still an adherent and pupil of Schopenhauer's. He conceived life as the manifestation of a blind will. Blindness came to be the very condition for Nietzsche of the truly active life; thought and consciousness were opposed to vitality. If we reject this presupposition Nietzsche's consequences become untenable. To be sure our consciousness of the past should not enfeeble or cripple our active powers. If employed in the right way it gives us a freer survey of the present and strengthens our responsibility with regard to the future. Man cannot mould the form of the future without being aware of his present conditions and of the limitations of his past. As Leibniz used to say: *on recède pour mieux sauter*, one draws back to leap higher. Heraclitus coined for the physical world the maxim *hodos and kató miê*, "the way up and the way down are one and the same."¹² We can in a sense apply the same statement to the historical world. Even our historical consciousness is a "unity of opposites": it connects the opposite poles of time and gives us thereby our feeling for the continuity of human culture.

This unity and continuity become especially clear in the field of our intellectual culture, in the history of mathematics or science or philosophy. Nobody could ever attempt to write a history of mathematics or philosophy without having a clear insight into the systematic problems of the two sciences. The facts of the philosophical past, the doctrines and systems of the great thinkers, are meaningless without an interpretation. And this process of interpretation never comes to a complete standstill. As soon as we have reached a new centre and a new line of vision in our own thoughts we must revise our judgments, No example is perhaps more characteristic and instructive in this respect than the change in our portrait of Socrates. We have the Socrates of Xenophon and Plato; we have a Stoic a sceptic, a mystic, a rationalistic, and a romantic Socrates. They are entirely dissimilar. Nevertheless they are not untrue; each of them gives us a new aspect, a characteristic perspective of the historical Socrates and his intellectual and moral physiognomy. Plato saw in Socrates the

¹⁰ For this problem see Guido Calogero, "On the So-Called Identity of History and Philosophy," in *Philosophy and History*, Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer, pp. 35-52.

¹¹ Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, in "Unzeit gemasse Betrachtungen" (1874), Pt. III. English trans, ed. by Oscar Levy, Vol. II.

¹² Fragment 60, in Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, I, 164.

great dialectician and the great ethical teacher; Montaigne saw in him the antidogmatic philosopher who confessed his ignorance; Friedrich Schlegel and the romantic thinkers laid the emphasis upon Socratic irony. And in the case of Plato himself we can trace the same development. We have a mystic Plato, the Plato of neo-Platonism; a Christian Plato, the Plato of Augustine and Marsilio Ficino; a rationalistic Plato, the Plato of Moses Mendelssohn; and a few decades ago we were offered a Kantian Plato. We may smile at all these different interpretations. Yet they have not only a negative but also a positive side. They have all in their measure contributed to an understanding and to a systematic valuation of Plato's work. Each has insisted on a certain aspect which is contained in this work, but which could only be made manifest by a complicated process of thought. When speaking of Plato in his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant indicated this fact. ". . . it is by no means unusual," he said, "upon comparing the thoughts which an author has expressed in regard to his subject, ... to find that we understand him better than he has understood himself. As he has not sufficiently determined his concept, he has sometimes spoken, or even thought, in opposition to his own intention."¹³ The history of philosophy shows us very clearly that the full determination of a concept is very rarely the work of that thinker who first introduced that concept. For a philosophical concept is, generally speaking, rather a problem than the solution of a problem—and the full significance of this problem cannot be understood so long as it is still in its first implicit state. It must become explicit in order to be comprehended in its true meaning, and this transition from an implicit to an explicit state is the work of the future.

It may be objected that this continuous process of interpretation and reinterpretation is indeed necessary in the history of ideas, but that the necessity no longer holds when we come to "real" history—to the history of man and human actions. Here it would seem as though we had to do with hard, obvious, palpable facts, facts which have simply to be related in order to be known, But not even political history forms an exception to the general methodological rule. What holds for the interpretation of a great thinker and his philosophical works holds also for judgments concerning a great political character. Friedrich Gundolf has written a whole book not about Caesar but about the history of Caesar's fame and the varying interpretations of his character and political mission from antiquity down to our own time.¹⁴ Even in our social and political life many fundamental tendencies prove their full force and significance only at a relatively late stage. A political ideal and a social program, long since conceived in an implicit sense, become explicit through a later development. "... many ideas of the germinal American," writes S. E. Morison in his history of the United States, "can be traced back to the mother country. In England these ideas persisted through the centuries despite a certain twisting and thwarting at the hands of Tudor monarchs and Whig aristocrats; in America they found opportunity for free development. Thus we ... find stout old English prejudices embalmed in the American Bills of Rights, and institutions long obsolete in England ... lasting with little change in the American States until the middle of the nineteenth century. It was an unconscious mission of the United States to make explicit what had long been implicit in the British Constitution, and to prove the value of principles that had largely been forgotten in the England of George III."¹⁵ In political history it is by no means the bare facts which interest us. We wish to understand not only the actions but the actors. Our judgment of the course of political events depends upon our conception of the men who were engaged in them, As soon as we see these individual men in a new light we have to alter our ideas of the events, Yet even so a true historical vision is not to be attained without a constant

¹³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (2nd ed.), p. 370. Trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (London, Macmillan, 1929), p. 310.

¹⁴ Friedrich Gundolf, *Caesar, Geschichte seines Ruhm* (Berlin, 1924).

¹⁵ S. E. Morison, *The Oxford History of the United States* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927), I, 39 f.

process of revision, Ferrero's *Greatness and Decline of Rome* differs on many important points from Mommsen's description of the same period. This disagreement is to a large extent due to the fact that the two authors have an entirely different conception of Cicero. In order to form a just judgment of Cicero it is not sufficient, however, simply to know all the events of his consulate, the part he played in the disclosure of the Catiline conspiracy or in the civil wars between Pompey and Caesar. All these matters remain dubious and ambiguous so long as I do not know the man, so long as I do not understand his personality and character. To this end some symbolic interpretation is required. I must not only study his orations or his philosophical writings; I must read his letters to his daughter Tullia and his intimate friends; I must have a feeling for the charms and defects of his personal style. Only by taking all this circumstantial evidence together can I arrive at true picture of Cicero and his role in the political life of Rome. Unless the historian remains a mere annalist, unless he contents himself with chronological narration of events, he must always perform this very difficult task; he must detect the unity behind innumerable and often contradictory utterances of a historical character.

To illustrate this point I wish to quote another characteristic example taken from the work of Ferrero. One of the "most important events in Roman history-an event which decided the future destiny of Rome and, consequently, the future of the world-was the Battle of Actium. The usual version is that Antony lost this battle because Cleopatra, who was frightened and despaired of the issue, turned her vessel, about and fled. Antony decided to follow her, abandoning his soldiers and friends for the sake of Cleopatra. If this traditional version is correct, then we must subscribe to Pascal's saying; we must admit that, had Cleopatra's nose been shorter, the whole face of the earth would have been changed.¹⁶ But Ferrero reads the historical text in a quite different manner. He declares the love story of Antony and Cleopatra to be a legend, Antony, he tells us, did not marry Cleopatra because he was passionately in love with her. On the contrary, Anthony was pursuing a great political plan. "Antony wanted Egypt and not the beautiful person of its queen; he meant by this dynastic marriage to establish the Roman protectorate in the valley of the Nile, and to be able to dispose, for the Persian campaign, of the treasures of the Kingdom of the Ptolemies With a dynastic marriage, he was able to secure for himself all the advantages of effective possession, without running the risks of annexation; so he resolved upon this artifice which ... had probably been imagined by Caesar. ... The romance or Antony and Cleopatra covers, at least in its beginnings, a political treaty, With the marriage, Cleopatra seeks to steady her wavering power; Antony, to place the valley of the Nile under the Roman protectorate. ... The actual history of Antony and Cleopatra is one of the most tragic episodes of a struggle that lacerated the Roman Empire for four centuries, until it finally destroyed it, the struggle between the Orient and Occident. ... In the light of these considerations, the conduct of Antony becomes very clear. The marriage at Antioch, by which he places Egypt under the Roman protectorate, is the decisive act of a policy that looks to transporting the centre of his government toward the Orient. ..." ¹⁷

If we accept this interpretation of the characters of Antony and Cleopatra then individual events, even the Battle of Actium, appear in a new and different light. Antony's flight from the battle, declares Ferrero, was by no means induced by fear, nor was it an act of blind and passionate love. It was a political act carefully thought out beforehand. "With the obstinacy, the certainty and the vehemence of an ambitious woman, of a confident and self-

¹⁶ Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Louandre, p. 196.

¹⁷ Guglielmo Ferrero, "The History and Legend of Antony and Cleopatra," in *Character; and Events of Roman History, from Caesar to Nero* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), pp. 39-68.

willed queen, Cleopatra strove to persuade the triumvir . . . to fall back upon Egypt by sea ... At the beginning of July Antony seems to have contemplated the abandonment of the war and a return to Egypt. It was impossible, however, to proclaim his intention of leaving Italy to Octavianus, of deserting the republican cause and betraying the Roman senators, who had left Italy for his sake. Cleopatra's ingenuity therefore conceived another device; a naval battle to mask the retreat was to be fought. Part of the army should be sent on board the fleet, other troops should be despatched to guard the most important points in Greece; the fleet should sail out in order of battle and should attack if the enemy advanced; then sail would be made for Egypt." ¹⁸ I am not setting forward here any opinion as to the correctness of this statement. What I wish to illustrate by this example is the general method of the historical interpretation of political events. In physics the facts are explained when we succeed in arranging them in a threefold serial order: in the order of space, time, cause and effect. Thereby they become fully determined; and it is just this determination which we mean when speaking of the truth or reality of physical facts. The objectivity of historical facts belongs, however, to a different and higher order. Here too we have to do with determining the place and the time of events. But when it comes to the investigation of their causes we have a new problem to face. If we knew all the facts in their chronological order we should have a general scheme and a skeleton of history; but we should not have its real life. Yet all understanding of human life is the general theme and the ultimate aim of historical knowledge. In history we regard all the works of man, and all his deeds, as precipitates of his life; and we wish to reconstitute them into this original state, we wish to understand and feel the life from which they are derived.

In this respect historical thought is not the reproduction, but the reverse, of the actual historical process. In our historical documents and monuments we find a past life which has assumed a certain form. Man cannot live his life without constant efforts to express it. The modes of this expression are variable and innumerable. But they are all so many testimonies of one and the same fundamental tendency. Plato's theory of love defines love as a desire for immortality. In love man strives to break the chain of his individual and ephemeral existence. This fundamental instinct may be satisfied in two ways. "Those who are pregnant in the body only betake themselves to women and beget children - this is the character of their love; their offspring, as they hope, will preserve their memory and give them blessedness and immortality. ... But souls which are pregnant conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or contain." ¹⁹

Hence a culture may be described as the product and offspring of this Platonic love. Even in the most primitive stage of human civilization, even in mythical thought, we find this passionate protest against the fact of death. ²⁰ In the higher cultural strata - in religion, art, history, philosophy - this protest assumes a new shape. Man begins to detect in himself a new power by which he dares to challenge the power of time. He emerges from the mere flux of things, striving to eternize and immortalize human life. The Egyptian pyramids seem to be built for eternity. The great artists think and speak of their works as *monumenta aere perennius*. They feel sure they have raised a monument which shall not be destroyed by the countless years and the flight of ages. But this claim is bound to a special condition. In order to endure, the works of man must be constantly renewed and restored. A physical thing remains in its present state of existence through its physical inertia. It retains its same nature so long as it is not altered or destroyed by external forces. But human works are vulnerable

¹⁸ Ferrero, *Grandezza e decadenza di Roma* (Milan, 1907), III, 502-539. English trans. by H. J. Chaytor, *Greatness and Decline of Rome* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), IV, 95 ff.

¹⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, 208-209; Jowett trans., I, 579 f.

²⁰ See above, p. 113-114.

from a quite different angle. They are subject to change and decay not only in a material but also in a mental sense. Even if their existence continues they are in constant danger of losing their meaning. Their reality is symbolic, not physical; and such reality never ceases to require interpretation and reinterpretation. And this is where the great task of history begins. The thought of the historian bears quite a different relation to its object from that of the physicist or naturalist. Material objects maintain their existence independently of the work of the scientist, but historical objects have true being only so long as they are remembered – and the act of remembrance must be unbroken and continuous. The historian must not only observe his objects like the naturalist; he must preserve them. His hope of keeping them in their physical existence can be frustrated at any moment. By the fire which destroyed the library of Alexandria innumerable and invaluable documents were lost forever. But even the surviving monuments would gradually fade away if they were not constantly kept alive by the art of the historian. In order to possess the world of culture we must incessantly reconquer it by historical recollection. But recollection does not mean merely the act of reproduction. It is a new intellectual synthesis - a constructive act. In this reconstruction the human mind moves in the opposite direction from that of the original process. All works of culture originate in an act of solidification and stabilization. Man could not communicate his thoughts and feelings, and he could not, accordingly, live in a social world, if he had not the special gift of objectifying his thoughts, of giving them a solid and permanent shape. Behind these fixed and static shapes, these petrified works of human culture, history detects the original dynamic impulses. It is the gift of the great historians to reduce all mere facts to their *fieri*, all products to processes, all static things or institutions to their creative energies. The political historians give us a life full of passions and emotions, violent struggles of political parties, of conflicts and wars between different nations.

But not all this is necessary to give to a historical work its dynamic character and accent. When Mommsen wrote his Roman History he spoke as a great political historian and in a new and modern tone. "I wanted to bring down the ancients," he said in a letter, "from the fantastic pedestal on which they appear into the real world. That is why the consul had to become the burgomaster. Perhaps I have overdone it; but my intention was sound enough."²¹ Mommsen's later works appear to be conceived and written in an entirely different style. Nevertheless they do not lose their dramatic character. It may appear paradoxical to attribute such a character to works which deal with the most arid subjects, as, for instance, the history of coinage or of Roman public law. But it is all done in the same spirit. Mommsen's *Romishes Staatsrecht* is not a mere codification of constitutional laws. These laws are filled with life; we feel behind them the great powers which were necessary to build up such a system. We feel the great intellectual and moral forces which alone could produce this organism of Roman law; the gift of the Roman spirit for ordering, organizing and commanding. Here too Mommsen's intention was to show us the Roman world in the mirror of Roman law. "As long as jurisprudence ignored the State and the people," he said, "and history and philology ignored law, both knocked in vain at the door of the Roman world."

If we understand the task of history in this way many of the problems which in the last decades have been discussed so eagerly and have found such diverse and divergent answers can be disentangled without difficulty. Modern philosophers have often attempted to construct a special logic of history. Natural science, they have told us, is based upon a logic of universals, history upon a logic of individuals. Windelband declared the judgment of

²¹ Mommsen in a letter to Henzen; quoted after G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1913; new ed. 1935), p. 457.

natural science to be nomothetic, - those of history to be idiographic.²² The former give us general laws; the latter describe particular facts. This distinction became the basis of Rickerfs whole theory of historical knowledge. "Empirical reality becomes nature, if we consider it with regard to the universal; it becomes history, if we consider it with regard to the particular."²³

But it is not possible to separate the two moments of universality and particularity in this abstract and artificial way. A judgment is always the synthetic unity of both moments; it contains an element of universality and of particularity. These elements are not mutually opposed; they imply and interpenetrate one another. "Universality" is not a term which designates a certain field of thought; it is an expression of the very character, of the function of thought. Thought is always universal. On the other hand the description of particular facts, of a "here" and "now," is by no means a privilege of history. The uniqueness of historical events has often been thought to be the character distinguishing history from science. Yet this criterion is not sufficient. A geologist who gives us a description of the various states of the earth in different geological periods gives us a report on concrete and unique events. These events cannot be repeated; they will not occur in the same order a second time. In this respect the description of the geologist does not differ from that of a historian who, for instance, like Gregorovius tells us the story of the city of Rome ill the Middle Ages. But the historian does not merely give us a series of events in a definite chronological order. For him these events arc only the husk beneath which he looks for a human and cultural life - a life of actions and passions, of questions and answers, of tensions and solutions. The historian cannot invent a new language and a new logic for all this. He cannot think or speak without using general terms. But he infuses into his concepts and words his own inner feelings, and thus gives them a new sound and a new colour - the colour ala personal life.

The fundamental dilemma of historical thought begins at precisely this point. Undoubtedly it is the richness and variety, the depth and intensity, of his personal experience which is. the distinctive mark of the great historian. Otherwise his work would remain lifeless and colourless. But how can *we* hope in this way to attain the ultimate objective of historical knowledge, how can we find out the truth of things and events? Is not a personal truth a contradiction in terms? Ranke once expressed the wish to extinguish his own self in order to make himself the pure mirror of things, in order to see the events in the way in which they actually occurred. It is clear, however, that this paradoxical statement was intended as a problem, not as a solution. If the historian succeeded in effacing his personal life he would not thereby achieve a higher objectivity. He would on the contrary deprive himself of the very instrument of all historical thought. If I put out the light of my own personal experience I cannot see and I cannot judge of the experience of others. Without a rich personal experience in the field of art no one can write a history of art; no one but a systematic thinker can give us a history of philosophy. The seeming antithesis between the objectivity of historical truth and the subjectivity of the historian must be solved in a different way.

Perhaps the best solution is to be found not in Ranke's words but in his works. Here we find the true explanation of what historical objectivity really means and what it does not mean. When Ranke published his first writings his ideal of historical truth was by no means generally understood by his contemporaries. His work was subjected to violent attacks. A well-known historian, Heinrich von Leo, reproached Ranke for his "timid avoidance of personal views"; he contemptuously described Ranke's writings as porcelain painting, the delight of ladies and amateurs. Nowadays such a judgment would appear, not only utterly

²² Windelband. "Geschichte nnd Naturwissenschaft," in *Praludien* (5th ed. Tübingen, 1915). Vol. II.

²³ Rickert, *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* (Tübingen, 1902), p. 255.

unjust but absurd and grotesque. Nevertheless it was repeated by later critics, especially by the historians of the Prussian School. Heinrich von Treitschke complained of Ranke's bloodless objectivity, "which does not say which side the narrator's heart is on."²⁴ Sometimes Ranke's adversaries in mocking tones compared his attitude and personal style to the attitude of the sphinxes in the second part of Goethe's *Faust*:

Sitzen vor den Pyramiden,
Zu der Volker Hochgericht;
Überschwemmung, Krieg und Frieden-
Und verziehen kein Gesicht.²⁵

Such sarcasm is, however, very superficial. No one can study Ranke's writings without being aware of the depth of his personal life and of his religious feeling. This feeling pervades all of his historical work. But Ranke's religious interest was broad enough to cover the whole field of religious life. Before venturing upon his description of the Reformation he had finished his great work on the *History of the Popes*. It was precisely the peculiar character of his religious sense which forbade him to treat religious questions in the manner of a zealot or in that of a mere apologist. He conceived history as a perpetual conflict between great political and religious ideas. To see this conflict in its true light he had to study all the parties and all the actors in this historical play. Ranke's sympathy, the sympathy of the true historian, is of a specific type. It does not imply friendship or partisanship. It embraces friends and opponents. This form of sympathy may best be compared to that of the great poets. Euripides does not sympathize with Medea; Shakespeare does not sympathize with Lady Macbeth or Richard III. Nevertheless they make us understand these characters; they enter into their passions and motives. The saying *tout comprendre est tout pardonner* holds neither for the works of the great artists nor for those of the great historians. Their sympathy implies no moral judgment, no approbation or disapproval of single acts. Of course the historian is entirely at liberty to judge, but before he judges he wishes to understand and interpret.

Schiller coined the dictum *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*, a saying re-echoed by Hegel and made one of the keystones of his philosophy of history. "The lots and deeds of the particular states and of the particular minds," said Hegel, "are the phenomenal dialectic of the finitude of these minds out of which arises the universal mind, the unlimited mind of the world. This mind wields its right - and its right is the highest - in them; in universal history, the judgment of the world. The history of the world is the judgment of the world, because it contains, in its selfdependent universality, all special forms - the family, civil society, and nation, reduced to ideality, *i. e.*, to subordinate but organic members of itself. It is the task of the spirit to produce all these special forms."²⁶ Even Ranke, however opposed to Hegel's fundamental views, could have subscribed to this one. But he conceived the mission of the historian in a less presumptuous way. He thought that in the great trial of the history of the

²⁴ For this criticism of Ranke's work see G. P. Gooch, *op. cit.*, chaps. vi, viii.

²⁵ 25. *Faust*, Pt. II, "Classische Walpurgisnacht." G. M. Priest translates as follows (New York, Knopf, 1941):

"At the pyramids our station
We look on the doom of races,
War and peace and inundation,
With eternal changeless faces."

²⁶ Hegel, *Rechtsphilosophie*, sees, 340 f. English trans. of the last two sentences by J. Macbride Sterrett, *The Ethics of Hegel, Translated Selections from his "Rechtsphilosophie"* (Boston, Ginn & Co., 1893), p. 207.

world the historian had to prepare, not to pronounce, the judgment. This is very far from moral indifference; it is, on the contrary, feeling of the highest moral responsibility. According to Ranke the historian is neither the prosecutor nor the counsel for the defendant. If he speaks as a judge, he speaks as the *juge d'instruction*. He has to collect all the documents in the case in order to submit them to the highest court of law, to the history of the world. If he fails in this task, if by party favouritism or hatred he suppresses or falsifies a single piece of testimony, then he neglects his supreme duty.

This ethical conception of his task, of the dignity and responsibility of the historian, is one of Ranke's principal merits and gave to his work its great and free horizon. His universal "sympathy could embrace all ages and all nations."²⁷ He was able to write the history of the Popes and the history of the Reformation, the history of France and the history of England, his work on the Ottoman and the Spanish Monarchy, in the same spirit of impartiality and without national bias. To him the Latin and Teutonic nations, the Greeks and Romans, the Middle Ages and the modern national states signified one coherent organism. Every new work permitted him to enlarge his historical horizon and to offer a freer and broader prospect. Many of Ranke's adversaries who did not possess this free and detached spirit tried to make a virtue of necessity. They asserted that it was impossible to write a work of political history without political passions and without national partiality. Treitschke, a representative of the Prussian School, even refused to study the material of non-Prussian archives. He feared lest he should be disturbed by such a study in his favourable judgment of Prussian politics.²⁸ Such an attitude may be understandable and excusable in a political pamphleteer or propagandist. But in a historian it symbolizes the breakdown and bankruptcy of historical knowledge. We may compare this attitude to the frame of mind of those adversaries of Galileo who consistently refused to look through the telescope and convince themselves of the truth of Galileo's astronomical discoveries because they did not wish to be disturbed in their implicit faith in the Aristotelian system. To such a conception of history we may oppose the words of Jakob Burckhardt, "Beyond the blind praise of our own country, another and more onerous duty is incumbent upon us as citizens, namely to educate ourselves to be comprehending human beings, for whom truth and the kinship with things of the spirit is the supreme good, and who can elicit our true duty as citizens from that knowledge, even if it were not innate in us. In the realm of thought, it is supremely just and right that all frontiers should be swept away."²⁹

As Schiller says in his *Aesthetic Letters* there is an art of passion, but there cannot be a "passionate art."³⁰ This same view of the passions applies also to history. The historian who was ignorant of the world of passions-of political ambitions, of religious fanaticism, and of economic and social conflicts-would give us a very dry abstract of historical events. But if he lays any claim to historical truth he himself cannot remain in this world. To all this material of the passions he must give theoretical form; and this form, like the form of the work of art, is no product and outgrowth of passion. History is a history of passions; but if history itself attempts to be passionate it ceases to be history. The historian must not exhibit the affections, the furies and frenzies which he describes. His sympathy is intellectual and imaginative, not emotional. The personal style which we feel in every line of a great historian is not an emotional or rhetorical style. A rhetorical style may have many merits; it may move and delight the reader. But it misses the principal point: it cannot lead us to an intuition and to a free and unbiased judgment of things and events.

²⁷ In an excellent appraisal of Ranke's personality and work Alfred Dove mentions his "Universalität des Mitempfindens." See Dove, *Aushgewählte Schriftchen* (1898), pp. 112 ff.

²⁸ See Ed. Fueter, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie* (3d ed. Munich and Berlin, 1936), p. 543.

²⁹ omitted

³⁰ *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical*, Letter XXII.

If we bear in mind this character of historical knowledge, it is easy to distinguish historical objectivity from that form of objectivity which is the aim of natural science. A great scientist, Max Planck, described the whole process of scientific thought as a constant effort to eliminate all "anthropological" elements. We must forget man in order to study nature and to discover and formulate the laws of nature.³¹ In the development of scientific thought the anthropomorphic element is progressively forced into the background until it entirely disappears in the ideal structure of physics. History proceeds in a quite different way. It can live and breathe only in the human world. Like language or art, history is fundamentally anthropomorphic. To efface its human aspects would be to destroy its specific character and nature. But the anthropomorphism of historical thought is no limitation of or impediment to its objective truth. History is not knowledge of external facts or events; it is a form of self-knowledge. In order to know myself I cannot endeavour to go beyond myself, to leap, as it were, over my own shadow. I must choose the opposite approach. In history man constantly returns to himself; he attempts to recollect and actualize the whole of his past experience. But the historical self is not a mere individual self. It is anthropomorphic but it is not egocentric. Stated in the form of a paradox, we may say that history strives after an "objective anthropomorphism." By making us cognizant of the polymorphism of human existence it frees us from the freaks and prejudices of a special and single moment. It is this enrichment and enlargement, not the effacement, of the self, of our knowing and feeling ego, which is the aim of historical knowledge.

This ideal of historical truth I'm developed very slowly, Even the Greek mind in all its richness and depth could not bring it to its full maturity. But in the progress of modern consciousness the discovery and formulation of this concept of history has become one of our most important tasks. In the seventeenth century historical knowledge is still eclipsed by another ideal of truth. History has not yet found its place in the sun. It is overshadowed by mathematics and mathematical physics. But then, with the beginning of the eighteenth century, there comes a new orientation of modern thought. The eighteenth century had often been looked upon as a nonhistorical or antihistorical century, But this is a one-sided and erroneous view. Eighteenth-century thinkers are the very pioneers of historical thought. They pose new questions and devise new methods of answering these questions. Historical investigation was one of the necessary instruments of the philosophy of the Enlightenment.³² But in the eighteenth century a pragmatic conception of history still prevails. No new critical concept appeared prior to the beginning of the nineteenth century, prior to the advent of Niebuhr and Ranke. From this time on, however, the modern concept of history is firmly established and it extends its influence over all the fields of human knowledge and human culture.

It was, however, not easy to determine the specific character of historical truth and historical method, A great many philosophers were prone rather to deny than to explain this specific character. So long as the historian continues to maintain special personal views, so long as he blames or praises, approves or disapproves, they have said, he will never live up to his proper task. He will, consciously or unconsciously, distort the objective truth. The historian must lose his interest in things and events in order to see them in their true shape. This methodological postulate received its clearest and most impressive expression in Taine's historical works. The historian, declared Taine, has to act like a naturalist. He must free himself not only from all conventional prejudices but from all personal predilections and all

³¹ See Max Planck "Die Einheit des physikalischen Weltbildes (Leipzig, 1909). For further details see Cassirer, *Substance and Function*, English trans. by W. C. and M. C. Swabey (1923), pp. 306 ff.

³² For further details see Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (Tubingen, 1932), chap. v, p. 263-312.

moral standards, "The modern method which I follow," said Taine in the introduction to his *Philosophy of Art*, "and which now begins to penetrate into all the moral sciences consists in regarding the human works ... as facts and products the properties of which have to be exhibited and the causes of which have to be investigated, When considered in this way science has neither to justify nor condemn. The moral sciences must proceed in the same way as botany which with equal interest studies the orange tree and the laurel, the pine and the beech, They are nothing else than a kind of applied botany which does not deal with plants but with the works of men. This is the general movement by which at present the moral sciences and the natural sciences are approximating one another, and by virtue of which the former will achieve the same certainty and the same progress as the latter,"³³ If we accept this view the problem of the objectivity of history appears to be solved in the simplest way. Like the physicist or chemist the historian must study the causes of things instead of judging their worth. "No matter if the facts be physical or moral," says Taine, "they all have their causes; there is a cause for ambition, for courage, for truth, as there is for digestion, for muscular movement, for animal heat. Vice and virtue are products, like vitriol and sugar; and every complex phenomenon has its 'springs from other more simple phenomena on which it hangs. Let us then seek the simple phenomena for moral qualities, as we seek them for physical qualities." In both cases we will find the same universal and permanent causes, "present at every moment and in every case, everywhere and always acting, indestructible, and in the end infallibly supreme, since the accidents which thwart them, being limited and partial, end by yielding to the dull and incessant repetition of their force; in such a manner that the general structure of things, and the grand features of events, are their work; and religions, philosophies, poetries, industries, the framework of society and of families, are in fact only the imprints stamped by their seal."³⁴

I do not intend here to enter into a discussion and criticism of this system of historical determinism.³⁵ A denial of historical causality would be precisely the wrong way to combat this determinism. For causality is a general category that extends over the whole field of human knowledge. It is not restricted to a particular realm, to the world of material phenomena. Freedom and causality are not to be considered as different or opposed metaphysical forces; they are simply different modes of judgment. Even Kant, the most resolute champion of freedom and of ethical idealism, never denied that all our empirical knowledge, the knowledge of men as well as that of physical things, has to recognize the principle of causality. It may be admitted, says Kant, "that if it were possible to have so profound an insight into a man's mental character as shown by internal as well as external actions, as to know all its motives, even the smallest, and likewise all the external occasions that can influence them, we could calculate a man's conduct for the future with as great certainty as a lunar or solar eclipse; and nevertheless we may maintain that the man is free."

³⁶ We are not here concerned with this aspect of the problem, with the metaphysical or ethical concept of freedom. We are interested only in the repercussion of this concept upon historical method. When studying Taine's principal works we are surprised to find that, practically speaking, this repercussion was very small. There would seem at first sight to be no greater and more radical difference than that between Taine's and Dilthey's respective conceptions of the historical world. The two thinkers approach the problem from two entirely different angles. Dilthey emphasizes the autonomy of history, its irreducibility to natural

³³ Taine, *Philosophie de l'art* (15th ed. Paris, Librairie Hachette, 1917) , Pt. I, chap. i, p. 13.

³⁴ Taine, *Histoire de la Litterature anglaise*, Intro. English trans., I, 6 f.

³⁵ I have dealt with this question in a paper entitled "Naturalistische und humanistische Begründung der Kulturphilosophie," Göteborgs Kungl Vetenskaps och Vitterhets-Samhällets Handlingar (Gothenburg, 1939).

³⁶ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. by T. K. Abbott (6th ed. 1927), p. 193.

science, its character as a *Geisteswissenschaft*. Taine emphatically denies this view. History will never become a science so long as it pretends to go its own way. There is only one mode and one path of scientific thought. But this view is immediately corrected when Taine begins with his own investigation and description of historical phenomena. "What is your first remark," he asks, "all turning over the great, stiff leaves of a folio, the yellow sheets of a manuscript - a poem, a code of laws, a declaration of faith? This, you say, was not created alone. It is but a mould, like a fossil shell, an imprint, like one of these shapes embossed in stone by an animal which lived and perished. Under the shell there was an animal, and behind the document there was a man. Why do you study the shell, except to represent to yourself the animal? So do you study the document only in order to know the man. The shell and the animal are lifeless wrecks, valuable only as a clue to the entire and living existence. We must reach back to this existence, endeavour to re-create it. It is a mistake to study the document, as if it were isolated. This were to treat things like a simple pedant, to fall into the error of the bibliomaniac. Behind all, we have neither mythology nor languages, but only men, who arrange words and imagery. . . nothing exists except through some individual man; it is this individual with whom we must become acquainted. When we have established the parentage of dogmas, or the classification of poems, or the progress of constitutions, or the modification of idioms, we have only cleared the soil. Genuine history is brought into existence only when the historian begins to unravel across the lapse of time, the living man, toiling, impassioned, entrenched in his customs, with his voice and features, his gestures and his dress, distinct and complete as he from whom we have just parted in the street. Let us endeavour, then, to annihilate as far as possible this great interval of time, which prevents us from seeing man with our eyes, with the eyes of our head. . . . A language, a legislation, a catechism is never more than an abstract thing: the complete thing is the man who acts, the man corporeal and visible, who eats, walks, lights, labours Let us make the past present: in order to judge of a thing, it must be before us; there is no experience in respect of what is absent. Doubtless this reconstruction is always incomplete; it can produce only incomplete judgments; but to that we must resign ourselves. It is better to have an imperfect knowledge than a futile or false one; and there is no other means of acquainting ourselves approximately with the events of other days, than to see approximately the men of other days"³⁷

All this is in perfect agreement with the view of history and historical method which we have tried to expound and defend in the foregoing. But if this view is correct it is impossible to "reduce" historical thought to the method of scientific thought. If we were to know all the laws of nature, if we could apply to man all our statistical, economic, sociological. rules, still this would not help us to "see" man in his special aspect and in his individual form. Here we are not moving in a physical but in a symbolic universe. And for understanding and interpreting symbols we have to develop other methods than those of research into causes. The category of meaning is not to be reduced to the category of being.³⁸ If we seek a general heading under which we are to subsume historical knowledge we may describe it not as a branch of physics but as a branch of semantics. The rules of semantics, not the laws of nature, are the general principles of historical thought. History is included in the field of hermeneutics, not in that of natural science. So much is admitted by Taine in practice but denied in theory. His theory recognizes but two tasks of the historian: he must collect the "facts" and he must investigate their causes. But what Taine completely overlooks is that these facts themselves are not immediately given to the historian. They are not observable like physical or chemical facts; they must be reconstructed. And for this reconstruction the historian must master a special and very complicated technique; he must learn to read his

³⁷ Taine, op. cit., pp. 1 ff.

³⁸ See above, p. 148.

documents and to understand the monuments in order to have access to a single and simple fact. In history the interpretation of symbols precedes the collection of facts, and without this interpretation there is no approach to historical truth.

This brings us to another much-controverted problem. It is obvious that history cannot describe all the facts of the past. It deals only with the "memorable" facts, with the facts "worth" remembering. But where lies the difference between these memorable facts and all the rest which fall into oblivion? Rickert tried to prove that the historian, in order to distinguish between historical and nonhistorical facts, must be in possession of a certain system of formal values and that he must use this system as his standard in the selection of facts. But this theory is liable to grave objections,³⁹ It would seem much more natural and plausible to say that the true criterion does not consist in the value of facts but in their practical consequences. A fact becomes historically relevant if it is pregnant with consequences. Many eminent historians have supported this theory. "If we ask ourselves," says Eduard Meyer, "which of the events we know of are historical, we have to reply: historical is whatever is effective or has become effective. What is effective we first experience in the present in which we immediately perceive the effect, but we call also experience it with respect to the past. In both cases we have before our eyes a mass of states of being, that is to say, of effects. The historical question is: whereby have these effects been produced? What we recognize as the cause of such an effect is a historical event."⁴⁰ But even this mark of distinction is not sufficient. If we study a historical work, especially a biographical work, we may find on almost every page mention of things and events which from a merely pragmatic point of view mean very little. A letter of Goethe's or a remark' dropped in one of his conversations has left no trace in the history of literature. Nevertheless we may think it notable and memorable. Without any practical effect this letter or this utterance may still be reckoned among those documents out of which we try to construct our historical portrait of Goethe. All this is not important in its consequences but it may be highly characteristic. All historical facts are characteristic facts, for in history-in the history of nations as well as in that of individuals-we never look upon deeds or actions alone. In these deeds we see the expression of character. In our historical knowledge-which is a semantic knowledge-we do not apply the same standards as in our practical or physical knowledge. A thing that physically or practically is of no importance at all may still have very great semantic meaning. The letter iota in the Greek terms *homo-ousios* and *homoi-ousios* meant nothing in a physical sense; but, as a religious symbol, as an expression and interpretation of the dogma of the Trinity, it became the starting point of interminable discussions which stirred up the most violent emotions and shook the foundations of religious, social, and political life. Taine liked to base his historical descriptions upon what he called "*de tout petits faits significatifs*." These facts were not significant with respect to their effects, but they were "expressive"; they were symbols by which the historian could read and interpret individual characters or the characters of a whole epoch. Macaulay tells us that, when he wrote his great historical work, he formed his conception of the temper of political and religious parties not from any single work but from thousands of forgotten tracts, sermons, and satires. All these things had no great historical weight and may have had very little influence upon the general course of events. They are, nevertheless, valuable, indeed indispensable, to the historian because they help him understand characters and events.

³⁹ 39. For a criticism of this theory see Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme*, in "Gesammelte Schriften," Vol. III, and Cassirer, *Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften* (Gothenburg, 1942), pp. 41 ff.

⁴⁰ Eduard Meyer, *Zur Theorie und Methodik der Geschichte* (Halle a. S., 1902), pp. 36 f.

In the second half of the nineteenth century there were many historians who set extravagant hopes upon the introduction of statistical methods. They prophesied that by the right use of this new and powerful weapon a new era of historical thought was going to be brought about. Were it possible to describe historical phenomena in terms of statistics, this would seem indeed to have revolutionary effect upon human thought. In this case our whole knowledge of man would suddenly take on a new appearance. We should have attained a great objective, a mathematics of human nature. The first historical writers to expound this view were convinced that not only the study of great collective movements but also the study of morality and civilization were to a large degree dependent on statistical methods. For there is a moral statistics as well as a sociological or economic statistics. In fact no province of human life *is* exempt from strict numerical rules, which extend over every field of human action.

This thesis was vigorously defended by Buckle in the general introduction to his *History of Civilisation in England* (1857). Statistics, declared Buckle, is the best and most conclusive refutation of the idol of a "free will." We now have the most extensive information, not only respecting the material interests of men but also respecting their moral peculiarities. We are now acquainted with the mortality rate, the marriage rate, and also with the crime rate of the most civilized peoples. These and similar facts have been collected, methodized, and are now ripe for use. That the creation of the science of history was retarded, and that history never was able to emulate physics or chemistry, is due to the fact that statistical methods were neglected. We did not realize that here too every event is linked to its antecedent by all inevitable connection, that each antecedent is connected with a preceding fact, and that thus the whole world—the moral world just as much as the physical—forms a necessary chain in which indeed each man may play his part. But he can by no means determine what that part shall be. "Rejecting, then, the metaphysical dogma of free will, ... we are driven to " the conclusion that the actions of men, being determined solely by their antecedents, must have character of uniformity, that is to say, must, under precisely the same circumstances, always issue in precisely the same results." ⁴¹

That statistics are indeed a great and valuable aid to the study of sociological or economic phenomena is of course undeniable. Even in the field of history the uniformity and regularity of certain human actions must be admitted. History does not deny that these actions, being the result of large and general causes at work upon the aggregate of society, produce certain consequences without regard to the volition of the individuals of whom society is composed. But when we come to the historical description of an individual act we have to face a quite different problem. By their very nature statistical methods restrict themselves to collective phenomena. Statistical rules are not designed to determine a single case; they deal only with certain "collectives." Buckle is very far from a clear insight into the character and purport of statistical methods. An adequate logical analysis of these methods came only at a later period. ⁴² He sometimes speaks of statistical laws in a rather queer way. He seems to regard them not as formulae which describe certain phenomena but as forces which produce these phenomena. This is of course, not science but mythology. To him statistical laws are in a sense "causes", which enforce certain actions upon us. Suicide, he holds, seems to be an entirely free act. But if we study moral statistics we must judge quite otherwise. We shall find that "suicide is merely the product of the general condition of society, and that the individual felon only carries into effect what is a necessary consequence of preceding circumstances. In a given state of society, a certain number of persons must put

⁴¹ Buckle, *History of Civilization in England* (New York, 1858), pp. 14 f.

⁴² For the modern literature on statistics, see Keynes, *A Treatise on Probability* (London, 1921), and von Mises, *Wahrscheinlichkeit, Statistik und Wahrheit* (Vienna, 1928).

an end to their own life. ... And the power of the larger law is so irresistible, that neither the love of life nor the fear of another I world can avail anything towards even checking its operation."⁴³ I need scarcely say that this "must" contains a whole nest full of metaphysical fallacies. The historian, however, is not concerned with this side of the problem. If he speaks of an individual case-let us say of Cato's suicide-it is obvious that for the historical interpretation of this individual fact he cannot expect any help from statistical methods. His primary intention is not to fix a physical event in space and time but to disclose the "meaning" of Cato's death. The meaning of Cato's death is expressed in Lucan's verse, "*Victrix causa diis placuit sed victa Catoni.*"⁴⁴ Cato's suicide was not only a physical act, it was a symbolic act. It was the expression of a great character; it *was* the last protest of the Roman republican mind against a new order of things. All this is completely inaccessible to those "large and general causes" which we may think of as responsible for the great collective movements in history. We may try to reduce human actions to statistical rules. But by these rules we shall never attain the end which is acknowledged even by the historians of the naturalistic school. We shall not "see" the men of other days, What we shall see in this case will not be the real life, the drama of history; it will only be the motions and gestures of puppets in a puppet show and the strings by which these marionettes are worked.

The same objection holds against all attempts to reduce historic knowledge to the study of psychological types. At first sight it would seem evident that, if we can speak of general laws in history, these laws cannot be the laws of nature but only the laws of psychology. The regularity which we seek and wish to describe in history does not belong to our outer but to our inner experience. It is a regularity of psychic states, of thoughts and feelings. If we were to succeed in finding a general inviolable law which governed these thoughts and feelings and prescribed for them a definite order, then we might think we had found the clue to the historical world.

Among modern historians it was Karl Lamprecht who became convinced that he had discovered such a law. In the twelve volumes of his *German History* he tried to prove his general thesis by a concrete example. According to Lamprecht there is an invariable order in which the states of the human mind follow one another. And this order once for all determines the process of human culture. Lamprecht rejected the views of economic materialism. Every economic act, like every mental act, he declared, depends on psychological conditions. But what we need is not an individual but a social psychology, a psychology that explains the changes in the social mind. These changes are bound to a fixed and rigid scheme. Hence history must cease being study of individuals; it must free itself from all sorts of hero worship. Its main problem has to do with social-psychic, as compared and contrasted with individual-psychic factors. Neither individual nor national differences can affect or alter the regular course of our social-psychic life. The history of civilization shows us, always and everywhere, the same sequence and the same uniform rhythm. From a first stage, which is described by Lamprecht as animism, we pass to an age of symbolism, typism, conventionalism, individualism, and subjectivism. This scheme is unchangeable and inexorable. If we accept this principle history is no longer a mere inductive science. We are in a position to make general deductive statements. Lamprecht abstracted his scheme from the facts of German history. But he by no means intended to restrict it to this one area. He thought his scheme was a generally applicable, a priori principle of all historical life. "We obtain from the total material," he wrote, "not only the idea of unity, historical and empirical, but also a general psychologic impression which absolutely declares and demands such a unity; all the simultaneous psychic incidents, the individual-psychic, as well as the socio-

⁴³ Buckle, *op. cit.*, p. 20

⁴⁴ "The conquering cause pleased the gods, but the conquered one pleased Cato."

psychic, have a tendency to approach common similarity." ⁴⁵ The universal psychic mechanism of the course of the various periods recurs everywhere, in modern Russia as well as in the history of Greece or Rome, in Asia as well as in Europe. If we peruse all the monuments of northern, middle, and southern Europe, along with those of the eastern Mediterranean and Asia Minor, it will appear that all these civilizations have advanced along parallel lines. "When this has been accomplished, we may estimate the importance to world history of each individual community or nation. A scientific *Welt-geschichte* can then be written." ⁴⁶

Lamprecht's general scheme is quite different from Buckle's conception of the historical process. Nevertheless the two theories have a point of contact. In both of them we meet with the same ominous term, with the term "must." After a period of typism and conventionalism there must always follow a period of individualism and subjectivism. No special age and no special culture can ever evade this general course of things, which seems to be a sort of historical fatalism. If this conception were true the great drama of history would become a rather dull spectacle which we could divide, once for all, into single acts whose sequence would be invariable. But the reality of history is not a uniform sequence of events but the inner life of man. This life can be described and interpreted after it has been lived; it cannot be anticipated in an abstract general formula, and it cannot be reduced to a rigid scheme of three or five acts. But here I do not intend to discuss the context of Lamprecht's thesis but only to raise a formal, methodological question. How did Lamprecht get the empirical evidence upon which to base his constructive theory? Like all previous historians he had to begin with a study of documents and monuments. He was not interested merely in political events, in social organizations, in economic phenomena. He wished to embrace the whole range of cultural life. Many of his most important arguments are based on a careful analysis of religious life, of the works of music and literature. One of his greatest interests was the study of the history of the fine arts. In his history of Germany he speaks not only of Kant and Beethoven but also of Fenerbach, Klinger, Boecklin. In his historical Institute in Leipzig he amassed astoundingly rich materials on all these questions. But it is clear that, in order to interpret these materials, he had first to translate them into a different language. To use the words of Taine he had to find behind the "fossil shell" the animal, behind the document the man. "When you consider with your eyes the visible man, what do you look for?" asked Taine. "The man invisible. The words which enter your ears, the gestures, the motions of his head, the clothes he wears, visible acts and deeds of every kind, are expressions merely; somewhat is revealed beneath them, and that is a soul. An inner man is concealed beneath the outer man; the second does but reveal the first. . . . All these externals are but avenues converging to a centre; you enter them simply in order to reach that centre; and that centre is the genuine man. . . . This underworld is a new subject-matter, proper to the historian." ⁴⁷ Hence it is precisely the study of the "naturalistic" historians, of Taine and Lamprecht, which confirms our own view, which convinces us that the world of history is a symbolic universe, not a physical universe.

After the publication of the first volumes of Lamprecht's *German History* the growing crisis in historical thought became more and more manifest and was felt in all its intensity. There arose a long and exasperated controversy about the character of historical method. Lamprecht had declared that all the traditional views were obsolete. He looked upon his own method as the only "scientific" and the only "modern" one. ⁴⁸ His adversaries, on the other

⁴⁵ Lamprecht, *What is History?* trans. by E. A. Andrews (New York, Macmillan, 1905), p. 63.

⁴⁶ Idem, p. 219.

⁴⁷ Taine, op. cit., I, 4.

⁴⁸ Cf. Lamprecht, *Alte und neue Richtungen in der Geschichtswissenschaft* (1896).

hand, were convinced that what he had given was a mere caricature of historical thought.⁴⁹ Both sides expressed themselves in very peremptory and uncompromising language. Reconciliation appeared, impossible. The scholarly tenor of the debate was often disrupted by personal or political prejudices. But if we approach the problem with an entirely unbiased mind and from a merely logical viewpoint we find, in spite of all the differences 'of opinion, a certain fundamental unity. As we have indicated, even the naturalistic historians did not deny, indeed they could not deny, that historical facts do not belong to the same type as physical facts. They were cognizant of the fact that their documents and monuments were not simply physical things but had to be read as symbols. On the other hand it is clear that each of the symbols - a building, a work of art, a religious rite - has its material side. The human world is not a separate entity or a self-dependent reality. Man lives in physical surroundings which constantly influence him and set their seal upon all the forms of his life. In order to understand his creations-his "symbolic universe"-we must constantly bear 'in mind this influence. In his masterpiece Montesquieu attempted to describe the "spirit of the laws." But he found that this spirit is everywhere bound down to its physical conditions. The soil, the climate, the anthropological character of the various nations were declared to be among the fundamental conditions of their laws and institutions. It is obvious that these physical conditions must be studied by physical methods. Both historical space and historical time are imbedded in a larger whole. Historical time is but a small fragment of a universal cosmic time. If we wish to measure this time, if we are interested in the chronology of events, we must have physical instruments. In the concrete world of the historian we find no opposition between these two views. They are perfectly fused into one. It is only in our logical analysis that we can separate one fact from the other. In the investigation of a complicated chronological problem the historian can proceed in different ways. He may use material or formal criteria; he may try statistical methods or ideal methods of interpretation. The very intricate question of the chronology of the Platonic dialogues could, to a great extent, be solved by statistical observations concerning the style of Plato. By various independent stylistic criteria it could be ascertained that a certain group of the dialogues-the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, *Philebus*;, and *Timaeus*-belongs to the period of Plato's old age.⁵⁰ And when Adickes prepared his edition of Kant's manuscripts he could find no better criterion for bringing them into a definite chronological order than a chemical analysis of the ink with which the various notes had been written. If, instead of using these physical criteria, we start from an analysis of Plato's or Kant's thoughts and their logical connection we need concepts which obviously belong to another domain. If, for example, I find a drawing or etching I may immediately recognize it as a work of Rembrandt; I may even be able to say to which period of Rembrandt's life it belongs. The stylistic criteria by which I decide this question are of quite another order than the material criteria.⁵¹ This dualism of methods does not impair the work of the historian, nor does it destroy the unity of historical thought. Both methods cooperate for a common end without disturbing or obstructing one another.

The question as to which of these methods has logical primacy over the other and which is the truly "scientific" method scarcely admits of a definite answer. If we accept Kant's definition that, in the proper sense of the word, we can apply the term "science" only

⁴⁹ For further details see Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* (5th ed., Munchen, Duucker, 1908), pp. 710 ff.

⁵⁰ For further details see W. Lutoslawski, *The Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic, with an Account of Plato's Style and of the Chronology of His Writings* (London and New York, 1907)

⁵¹ I have discussed the logical character of these "stylistic concepts" in *Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften* (Gothenburg, 1942), pp. 63 ff.

to a body of knowledge the certainty of which is apodictic,⁵² then it is clear that we cannot speak of a science of history. But the name we give to history does not matter provided that we have a clear insight into its general character. Without being an exact science history will always maintain its place and its inherent nature in the organism of human knowledge. What we seek in history is not the knowledge of an external thing but a knowledge of ourselves. A great historian like Jakob Burckhardt in his work on Constantine the Great or on the civilization of the Renaissance did not presume to have given a scientific description of these epochs. Nor did he hesitate to propound the paradox that history is the most unscientific of all the sciences.⁵³ "What I construct historically," wrote Burckhardt in a letter, "is not the result of criticism or speculation but of imagination seeking to fill the gaps in observations. To me history is still in a large measure poetry, it is a series of the most beautiful and picturesque compositions."⁵⁴ The same view was upheld by Mommsen. Mommsen was not only a scientific genius; he was at the same time one of the greatest organizers of scientific labour. He created the *Corpus inscriptionum*; he organized the study of numismatics, and published his *History of the Coinage*. This was hardly the work of an artist. But when Mommsen was admitted to the office of rector of the University of Berlin and gave his inaugural address he defined his ideal of the historical method by saying that the historian belongs perhaps rather to the artists than to the scholars. Although he was himself one of the most eminent teachers of history he did not scruple, nevertheless, to assert that history is not a thing which can be immediately acquired by teaching and learning. "The treadle which glides a thousand threads, and the insight into the individuality of men and nations, are gifts of genius which defy all teaching and learning. If a professor of history thinks he is able to educate historians in the same sense as classical scholars and mathematicians can be educated, he is under a dangerous and detrimental delusion. The historian is not made, he is born; he cannot be educated, he has to educate himself."⁵⁵

But even though we cannot deny that every great historical work contains and implies an artistic element, it does not thereby become a work of fiction. In his quest for truth the historian is bound by the same strict rules as the scientist. He has to utilize all the methods of empirical investigation. He has to collect all the available evidence and to compare and criticize all his sources. He is not permitted to forget or neglect any important fact. Nevertheless, the last and decisive act is always an act of the productive imagination. In a conversation with Eckermann Goethe complained that there were few men who have "imagination for the truth of reality" ("*eine Phantasie für die Wahrheit des Realen*"). "Most prefer strange countries and circumstances," he said, "of which they know nothing, and by which their imagination may be cultivated, oddly enough. Then there are others who cling altogether to reality, and, as they wholly want the poetic spirit, are too severe in their requisitions."⁵⁶ The great historians avoid both extremes. They are empiricists; they are careful observers and investigators of special facts; but they do not lack the "poetic spirit." It is the keen sense for the empirical reality of things combined with the free gift of imagination upon which the true historical synthesis or synopsis depends.

⁵² Kant, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft Vorrede*, "Werke" (ed. Cassirer), IV, 370.

⁵³ Jakob Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, p. 81. English trans., *Force and Freedom*, p. 167.

⁵⁴ *Basle Jahrbucher* (1910). pp, 109 f.; quoted after Karl Joel, *Jakob Burckhardt als Geschichtsphilosoph* (Basle, 1918),

⁵⁵ Th. Mommsen, "Rektorsrede" (1874), in *Reden und Aufsätze* (Berlin, 1912).

⁵⁶ Goethe to Eckermann, December 25, 1825, in *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Sorel*, trans. by John Oxenford (London, 1874), p. 162.

The equipoise of these opposing forces cannot be described in a general formula. The proportion appears to vary from one age to another and from one individual writer to another. In ancient history we find a different conception of the task of the historian from that of modern history. The speeches which Thucydides inserted in his historical work have no empirical basis. They were not spoken as Thucydides gives them. Yet they are neither pure fiction nor mere rhetorical adornment. They are history, not because they reproduce actual events but because, in the work of Thucydides, they fulfil an important historical function. They constitute in a very pregnant and concentrated form a characterization of men and events. Pericles' great funeral oration is perhaps the best and most impressive description of Athenian life and Athenian culture in the fifth century. The style of all these speeches bears the personal and genuine mark of Thucydides. "They are all distinctly Thucydidean in style," it has been said, "just as the various characters in a play of Euripides all use similar diction."⁵⁷ Nevertheless they do not convey merely personal idiosyncrasies; they are representative of the epoch as a whole. In this sense they are objective, not subjective; they possess an ideal truth, if not an empirical truth. In modern times we have become much more susceptible to the demands of empirical truth, but we are perhaps frequently in danger of losing sight of the ideal truth of things and personalities. The just balance between these two moments depends upon the individual tact of the historian; it cannot be reduced to a general rule. In the modern historical consciousness the proportion has changed but the elements have remained the same. With regard to the distribution and strength of the two forces every historian has his personal equation. And yet the ideality of history is not the same as the ideality of art. Art gives us an ideal description of human life by a sort of alchemistic process; it turns our empirical life into the dynamic of pure forms.⁵⁸ History does not proceed in this way. It does not go beyond the empirical reality of things and events but molds this reality into a new shape, giving it the ideality of recollection. Life in the light of history remains a great realistic drama, with all its tensions and conflicts, its greatness and misery, its hopes and illusions, its display of energies and passions. This drama, however, is not only felt; it is intuited. Seeing this spectacle in the mirror of history while we are still living in our empirical world of emotions and passions, we become aware of an inner sense of clarity and calmness - of the lucidity and serenity of pure contemplation. "The mind," wrote Jakob Burckhardt into his *Reflections on World History* "must transmute into a possession the remembrance of its passage through the ages of the world. What was once joy and sorrow must now become knowledge. ... Our study, however, is not only a right and a duty; it is also a supreme need. It is our freedom in the very awareness of universal bondage and the stream of necessities."⁵⁹ Written and read in the right way history elevates us to this atmosphere of freedom amidst all the necessities of our physical, political, social, and economic life.

It was not my design in this chapter to deal with the problems of a philosophy of history. A philosophy of history, in the traditional sense of the term, is a speculative and constructive theory of the historical process itself. An analysis of human culture need not enter upon this speculative question. It sets up for itself a more simple and modest task. It seeks to determine the place of historical knowledge in the organism of human civilization. We cannot doubt that without history we should miss an essential link, in the evolution of this organism. Art and history are the most powerful instruments of our inquiry into human nature. What would we know of man without these two sources of information? We should be dependent on the data of our personal life, which can give us only a subjective view and

⁵⁷ See J. R. Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians*, Harvard Lectures (New York, Macmillan, 1909), Lecture IV.

⁵⁸ See above, pp. 192 ff.

⁵⁹ Burckhardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 f. English trans., pp. 86 f.

which at best are but the scattered fragments of the broken mirror of humanity. To be sure, if we wished to complete the picture suggested by these introspective data we could appeal to more objective methods. We could make psychological experiments or collect statistical facts. But in spite of this our picture of man would remain inert and colourless. We should only find the "average" man - the man of our daily practical and social intercourse. In the great works of history and art we begin to see, behind this mask of the conventional man, the features of the real, individual man. In order to find him we must go to the great historians or to the great poets-to tragic writers like Euripides or Shakespeare, to comic writers like Cervantes, Moliere, or Laurence Sterne, or to our modern novelists like Dickens or Thackeray, Balzac or Flaubert, Gogol or Dostoyevsky. Poetry is not a mere imitation of nature; history is not a narration of dead facts and events. History as well as poetry is an organon of our self-knowledge, an indispensable instrument for building up our human universe.