

## THE CONCEPT OF HISTORY

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This paper discusses various concepts of History, as they have been developed from man's contingent (changing, variable) experience of reality and the needs, problems and aspirations emerging from this basic human experience. In terms of a few prominent historical models, it is shown how the meaning of history changes together with the changing *Zeitgeist*. It is demonstrated that historical theories breathe a definite *Zeitgeist* and reflect the concrete needs, problems, and aspirations of contemporaries. In this way, the practical and existential character of historical theories emerges, as does man's striving for self-understanding.

The scientific character of historical theories, as of all other theories, consists in their being methodological constitutions of a specific type of human experience, in this case historical experience. Method makes these theories truth-perspectives, which derive their meaning from the specific perception of the historical conditions prevailing at the time. In terms of man's contingent experience of reality, from which, ultimately, all theories, of whatever type, are conceived, the argument that history has no meaning is refuted. Such a perception rests on the absolutization of one particular method, namely, that of the natural sciences. Historical theories, as all other theories, are controversial and problematic, entering into a critical relationship with one another, in terms of which the argument on the meaning of History continues.

In hierdie artikel word die verskillende konsepte van Geskiedenis bespreek soos wat dit as gevolg van die mens se veranderende beleving van die werklikheid en die behoeftes, probleme en begeertes wat vanuit hierdie basiese menslike beleving ontstaan, ontwikkel het. Ooreenkomstig 'n paar prominente historiese modelle, word aangetoon hoe die betekenis van geskiedenis saam met die veranderende *Zeitgeist* gewysig is. Dit word duidelik gestel dat historiese teorieë 'n bepaalde *Zeitgeist* inadem en die konkrete behoeftes, probleme en begeertes van die tydgenote weerspieël. Op hierdie wyse kom die praktiese en bestaande karakter van historiese teorieë tevoorskyn, soos ook die mens se strewe daarna om homself te verstaan.

Die wetenskaplike aard van historiese teorieë, soos met alle ander teorieë, kom na vore in die feit dat hulle metodologiese samestellings van 'n bepaalde vorm van menslike beleving is, in hierdie geval van historiese beleving. Deur die toepassing van 'n metode word hierdie teorieë perspektiewe op die waarheid, wat hulle betekenis ontleen aan die spesifieke gewaarwording van die historiese toestande wat op die tydstop oorheersend is. Ooreenkomstig die mens se veranderende beleving van die werklikheid, waaruit alle teorieë van watter aard ookal uiteindelik ontstaan, word die redenasie dat geskiedenis geen betekenis het nie, weerspreek. Só 'n beskouing berus op die verabsolutisering van een spesifieke metode, naamlik die wetenskaplike metode. Historiese teorieë, soos alle ander teorieë, is aanvegbaar en problematies en staan in 'n kritiese verhouding tot mekaar, waarbinne die redenasie oor die betekenis van geskiedenis steeds voortduur.

### Introduction

The science of history is founded on man's historical experience as one particular type of experience. This means that man has a historical consciousness, i.e. an awareness of his current socio-political position being conditioned by a string of historical events of the past – events of a cultural, social and political nature. The contingent nature of man's historical experience is demonstrated by the fact that it is variable and changes along with changing historical conditions. It is the product of what Hegel has designated as *Zeitgeist* – the spirit of the

age. Whereas the natural scientists, again and again, come forth with new scientific theories or truth-perspectives on nature and even cosmologies, which include man and explain human culture and civilization in terms of natural or cosmological laws (Darwin's "law of natural selection" or Haeckel's "law of substance" as the "universal law of evolution"), the historian proper continues to explore systematically the events of the past, interprets them within the context of the respective *Zeitgeist* (his specific historical consciousness) and constitutes them methodologically as a theory or truth-perspective. It is the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the age which determines the prevailing interests, the kind of questioning and the assumptions of historians. No matter how objective a historian strives to be, he can never perfectly comply with Leopold von Ranke's dictum that historical events must be treated as they happened at the time: *Wie es einmal gewesen ist*.

The varying *Zeitgeist*, which conditions the historical consciousness, is of course also the reason for the different interpretations of the meaning of history as they have been conceived in the philosophy of history. Polibius, Cicero, Augustine, Vico, Voltaire, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Burckhardt, Collingwood, Toynbee, Popper, to mention a few philosophers of history, put forward doctrines that breathe the spirit of their own age. Kurt Breysig,<sup>1</sup> who sees the meaning of all historical enquiry in untwining the rope of history, i.e., unravelling the web of time that is woven by historical events, emphasizes the point that historical research does not stand above or outside history, but is itself interwoven in the web of the time. History is experienced and made by man, he both acts and constitutes it. Giving an account of history, is giving an account of himself.

### "Historia" in terms of natural and religious events

*Historia* means exploration. It is connected with *istor* (the knower, the witness, the arbiter). According to Plato and Theophrastos, it means the deduction of the world from a hylozoistic *arché* and the exploration of remote puzzling world-phenomena, such as magnetism, deluges, eclipses of the sun. For the Greek historian Herodotus *historia* meant *Historia Apothesis* (representation of the explored): reports, connections and relations which he had himself explored. Thukydides, on the other hand, emphasizes the result of the explored. Ephoros, the author of the first Greek universal history, entitles his work: *Istoriai*. The *Zeitgeist* that determined Greek cosmological thinking, of which human affairs formed an integral part, clearly manifests itself in the fact that, since Aristotle, *historia* is a fixed concept in the sense of *polyhistory*, the diverse learning of cosmic events. Man forming an integral part of the cosmos, this included human affairs. *Polyhistory* was distinguished from poetry.

In Rome *historia* meant history recounted in the form of annals. An example is Cicero's interpretation of history in terms of human qualities. Livy "refined the traditional framework of *annales*, elaborating the anthropocentric and providential view of historical development, which Cicero had associated with fullscale *historia*, the purpose of which was to interpret history in its inner relations".<sup>2</sup> However, in keeping with the pragmatic, political and legal mind of the Romans, *historia* also assumed the meaning of historical events.

In the Middle Ages, no special position is assigned to *historia* in the *artes liberales*. Augustine and Isidor add it to grammar seen as the instrument for the understanding of the sources. Augustine teaches that the scriptures must first be understood historically and then spiritually (allegorically). The Bible must be read as *narratio rerum proprie gestarum*, and it is

1. K. Breysig, *Die Meister der entwickelnden Geschichtsforschung* (Berlin, 1936).

2. A.D. Botha, *Journal of the University of Durban-Westville* (Durban, 1985), pp. 38-50.

imperative to abide by its *veritas historiae*. Augustine's view of history, of man advancing from the *civitas terrena* to the *civitas dei*, is developed further by Hugo St. Victor in terms of Christology: the act of salvation by the *Logos*, who operates in the Old Testament and appears in Christ. Finally, there is Martin von Troppau's *Chronicle* and Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale*, a collection of historical materials integrated in a system of the sciences. In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas constitutes a Christian cosmos, the apex of which is formed by God's word (revelation). Man's position in it – hence also in society – is determined by God. While it is the state's task to educate man in a Christian spirit, so as to enable him to act for the common good, the purpose of the Church is to prepare him for salvation, for the highest bliss experienced in his contemplation of God.

### The meaning of "Geschichte"

*Geschichte*, which may be rendered as the dynamics of human action, is that which *geschieht* or comes to pass. In contrast to learned *historia* based on knowledge, it has the flavour of blind events. It describes the accidental event of the moment. In this meaning, the word appears in the 8th and 9th centuries. In the times of humanism, it appears beside *historia*. At that time, religious aspects are excluded and history deals with the origin of nations, the history of cities and dynasties. In Germany, the awakening of national consciousness finds expression in the historical writings of Konrad Celtis, who edited Tacitus' *Germania*, and Jacob Wimpfling, who wrote a German history, entitled: *Epitome rerum Germanicarum*. Johannes Sleidanus, in 1555, wrote the classical history of the Reformation, entitled: *De statu religionis et reipublicae Carlo V. Imperatore commentarii*. All these writings sought to come to grips with the strife-ridden age of the Renaissance period, the political and religious struggles of the German mosaic of territories and principalities: the wars of religion, the revolts of the peasants and imperial knights, which were sometimes connected with the national spirit directed against the rule of the Roman Church and the Pope. One of the representatives of the German national idea is the imperial knight Ulrich von Hutten, a staunch supporter of Martin Luther's Reformation and struggle against Rome.

In Italy, which was equally torn into smaller or larger political units, it was Nicolo Machiavelli who pleaded for the country's unity under the leadership of a strong prince. He laid the foundation for a historiography which, not from the moral but from the pragmatic point of view, wants to show statesmen "the causes of enmity and strife in the cities" and legislators "the maliciousness of all people and the distortion of their soul". In his *Il Principe* (1513), the guiding principle is: the state is not a means to an end but an end in itself.

Generally speaking, it may be said that, during the Renaissance period, a new *Zeitgeist* emerged. The new way of thinking was the result of the discoveries of new continents, inventions like gun powder, the printing press, the telescope and the microscope. These widened the scope of human thinking geographically, intellectually and scientifically. From the theocentric position of the Middle Ages, human thinking moved to an anthropocentric position in the Renaissance, as emerges from the term humanism, which characterizes this epoch.

### History as progress

The anthropocentric way of thinking was continued in the Age of Reason, with this difference that the hallmark of history became *progress*. This was due to the impact of rationalistic and empirical philosophy, which went hand in hand with the deployment of mathematical and scientific thinking. Man came to feel that he was capable of obtaining knowledge by his natural capacities. This accounts for his strong belief in progress, which originally means:

The process of mankind's and society's moral improvement and eventual perfection. In this connection, the problem of the relationship between history and the sciences emerges. It was in the Age of Reason or Enlightenment that *historia* really became *Geschichte*. By his *Essai sur des mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (1843), Voltaire began a new era of history writing. Theologically orientated universal history was superseded by the history of mankind. Not the history of virtues was important as taught by Machiavelli, but what mattered was the history of progress.

The forerunner of the history of progress was Vico who, in his *La Scienza Nuova Prima* (1744), sought to raise history to the status of a science. He believed that history repeated itself in regular *corsi* and *recorsi*. He distinguishes three ages characterized by their own law systems and language forms: the ages of gods, heroes and man. Divine providence guarantees an even change of barbarism, ascendancy and downfall. History's final goal consists in humanity being mediated by the Christian religion.

Theoreticians succeeding Vico, who propagate a more secularized version of progress, are Turgot, Condorcet and Comte in France and Hume in Britain. Comte's conception of progress consists in the law of Three Stages, the "positive" natural and social sciences forming the highest stage. Operating under this law, historical progress is scientific and, as the outcome of this law, science is historical (cf. 1830-1842).

Hume's version of progress may be designated as natural progress. To him, the purpose of studying history is to understand the socio-political conflicts of one's own time, with a view to curing them. Tomlin writes: "The difficulties and disturbances of his own age needed, in his (Hume's) view, first to be understood in order to be cured. . . Hume realized that the key to the understanding of present social stress lay in history, in the chain of events that led up to the present".<sup>3</sup> Hume considers the desire for understanding in history to be as much lodged in the human "disposition for consistency" in the face of conflict and contradiction as the desire for understanding in nature. In both, as well as in ethics and religion, understanding depends on the understanding of man. "There is no question of importance, whose decision is not comprised in the science of man", he writes in the introduction to his *Treatise of Nature* (1740).

### History as hypothesis

According to Kant, *Geschichte* is a hypothesis, which may be a mere utopia, but historical (socio-political) events show the tendency towards a perfect republican constitution. Evidence for this concept Kant derives from the conflict experience of his own time: the stage of civilization mankind had reached in its development from the stage of savages. In accordance with the *Zeitgeist* of the Enlightenment era he believed in progress, so that he considered the stage of civilization of his own time, at which reason is still used for selfish purposes: the acquisition of property, in this sense happiness, as a transitory stage in mankind's development towards the highest stage of reason and morality, towards a republican mode of government, where perpetual peace reigns. Kant perceives in nature a concealed plan, a teleological movement from legality to morality, which movement is to be performed by mankind's rational striving. According to this plan, man is required to work his way out of paradise (the stage of primitivity, animalism and instinct) and through reason as a guide – *Leitfaden der Vernunft* – advance to rational autonomy (freedom). Although, as he points out in: *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (1784), history is an *apriori* construction, a hypothesis, it is events such as the French Revolution that show in man the tendency of a rational striving for a perfect republican constitution. It is on such evidence that the assumption of such a hypothesis is justified.

E.W.F. Tomlin, *The Western Philosophers — An Introduction* (London, 1950), p. 186.

### History as the cyclic movement of the world spirit

In contradistinction to Kant's rational striving as an expression of subjective human reason, Hegel's Absolute Spirit<sup>4</sup> is both substance (potentiality) and subject (self-consciousness), subject and object of World History. In the latter, it manifests itself as *principium individuationis* in the succeeding stages of the natural sciences, society and politics, fine arts and religion. As a result of the tension between subject (thesis) and object (antithesis), this tension manifesting itself in its drive towards self-emancipation, during which it externalizes itself as an object in the scientific and historical world of individuals, the Spirit moves, in a dialectical cycle, from substantial freedom to concrete self-consciousness (freedom). This movement constitutes World History as a synthesis, when the Spirit has returned to and fulfilled itself. At this final stage of the Spirit's self-emancipation, the *principium individuationis* has been superseded by the *principium universalis*, and all contradictions have been resolved by the principle of identity: the identity between thinking (reason) and being (reality). This identity denotes Hegel's concept of Truth.

By the dialectical movement of the Spirit, the cyclic movement away from itself as mere potentiality and back to itself as concrete self-consciousness (freedom) and the principle: What is rational is real and what is real is rational, Hegel has, theoretically, overcome the basic conflict of his age: between the progressive forces of the French Revolution and the restorative forces of the time. The divine character of the Spirit enabled Hegel to demonstrate the unity between throne (the state) and pulpit (religion). The synthesis of the French Revolution and Napoleon was Prussia, the embodiment of the Spirit, which had liberated mankind from Napoleon's tyranny, in whose monarch Hegel saw the impersonation of reason and the synthesis of throne and pulpit.

### History as the changing of the world through labour

If, for Hegel, the basic historical experience were the socio-political conflicts emerging from the French Revolution, it was for Marx and Engels the socio-political conflicts rising from the Industrial Revolution. It was the class-struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie that was Marx's and Engels's basic experience of reality. In their operationalistic way of thinking, the world-and consciousness-forming process of labour and production can be seen as the incentive for world events. This is shown when Marx designates World History "as nothing but the production of man through human labour".<sup>5</sup> The concept of labour may change in the various Marxist theories, but always the unity of nature and society, science and history, theory and practice, necessity and freedom is mediated through labour.

It is through the process of labour and production that the contradiction between theory and practice, suprastructure and infrastructure is gradually overcome and man from a state of alienation is moved to the state of authentic existence as a free creative being. Through labour, he is merged with historical reason, of which the classless communist society is the highest expression. It is thus the working class, the proletariat, which is the historical class. It is the agent of World History and, as such, takes the place of Hegel's Absolute Spirit. Through World Revolution, it brings about the classless communist society, where all social conflicts have been overcome and the principle of identity has been fulfilled. Man is in step with nature, himself and society, thus leading an authentic existence.

4. G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke* (Frankfurt/M., 1970), p. 12.

5. K. Marx & F. Engels, *MEW* (Berlin, 1956-1974), Suppl. Vol. 1, p. 546.

## History as critical reflection in Neo-Marxism

In view of the problems, needs and aspirations that have emerged from the conflict experience as a result of the contemporary Technological Revolution, which, according to the neo-Marxist School of Critical Theory, is repressive, the latter school of thought discards Marx's and Engels's Historical Materialism as well as the concept of the class-struggle. As Herbert Marcuse points out: Having been absorbed to a large extent into the technological and ideological establishments of West and East, respectively, the workers have lost their revolutionary *élan*. The working class, no longer, constitutes the subject of history, this role having fallen to the young, the socially ostracized and the people of the Third World. Taking the place of the proletariat, it is they who now represent the revolutionary forces of liberation.<sup>6</sup>

Critical Theory has made a few notable and valuable contributions towards an understanding of man in the present situation. Critically reflecting on History, it has pointed out that, so far, history is the growing rule of man over nature, which is, at the same time, the growing rule of man over man. This led to an ingrained feeling of power. Therefore, an analysis of history reveals dread and suffering among the new generation. What is required is the use of critical insight for the purpose of the uncovering of authority as an inveterate urge for power, not only from the economic but also from the psychological point of view. In the light of this uncovering as well as the experienced catastrophes and those to come . . . "the thesis of a historical world plan for improvement appears cynical".<sup>7</sup> The logicity ascribed to history by Hegel and Marx, and as it is being ascribed to it by Marxism-Leninism, this deification of historical reason at the expense of suffering nature, is *index falsi*. Especially Adorno's and Horkheimer's negative dialectics represent some kind of counter-history in this respect. All the same, Critical Theory, as is pointed out in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*,<sup>8</sup> is itself a philosophy of history, a counter-philosophy of history. Horkheimer's and Adorno's programme of history is quoted thus (translation from German): "A philosophical construction of world history would have to show how, in the face of all deviations and odds; the rule of nature consistently grows, integrating man's inner experience".

That this cannot mean a departure from history emerges from the fact that Critical Theory is in itself a philosophy of history, which holds that nature, too, is supposed to be conceived by history. Especially Habermas (1968) continues to conceive history as a totality from which civilization must be understood. Integrating analytical and hermeneutical methods, Critical Theory's task is to uncover this totality as relations of work and power.

## History has no meaning

In contrast to Critical Theory and being criticized by it on this, neo-positivism holds that history has no meaning. Its belief that only the natural sciences yield objective knowledge, while history is subjective is highly controversial. The subjective factor in the natural sciences, their existential role, social accountability and moral responsibility, as they have been pointed out by the great physicist Max Born, is overlooked. So is the man-madness of scientific theories, which remain as controversial and problematic as historical theories. Max Born<sup>9</sup> says: "Physics is only *one* science among many and all sciences only *one* activity of the human intellect among many". Heisenberg writes: "In its beginnings the modern natural sciences

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H. Marcuse, *Negations* (Boston, 1968); H. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston, 1969). Th.W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt/M, 1969), p. 297.

J. Ritter & K. Gründer, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Stuttgart, 1974), pp. 3, 436. M. Born, *Von der Verantwortung eines Naturwissenschaftlers* (Munich, 1965), pp. 87-113.

were distinguished by their studied modesty. Its statements concerned processes that were strictly limited, that were valid only within the framework of these limits. In the 19th century this modesty, to a large extent, went lost. The statements of physics are regarded as statements of nature as a whole. Physics wants to be philosophy. Occasionally it is postulated that every true philosophy must be the natural sciences. Today physics undergoes a radical change, the most marked feature of which appears to be a return to original self-restraint".<sup>10</sup>

These words of a great leading scientist, seem to have escaped certain neo-positivistic philosophers of science, among others Karl Popper. Hence his verdict history has no meaning. How does he arrive at this conclusion. The answer is by regarding history through the goggles of the natural sciences. According to him, history has no meaning because, in terms of the principle of fertile plurality (conceived by him) there is no history, only histories. Nevertheless says Popper, we are able to give it meaning. We can fight for self-emancipation through knowledge (by which is of course meant knowledge of the natural sciences), because our ideas are powers that influence history. In other words, for the purpose of self-emancipation scientific knowledge can be applied to the historical world of problem situations. In this way, the transition from the closed to the open society, "the greatest revolution in history", will be accomplished. The realization of this goal is the functional task of *social technology* developed by *social engineers on a scientific basis*.<sup>11</sup>

Generally speaking, the trouble with Popper is that, unlike the great scientists, he does not realize the man-madness of scientific theories, his theory of science included. He fails to realize the specific historical nature of his own theory, which reflects contemporary conditions. Because he measures and judges history by his functionalistic piecemeal method, he regards history as having no laws, trends or tendencies. There are, according to him, no provable or testable hypotheses as in the natural sciences. There are merely attitudes, general interpretations: quasi theories. Which theory is to be chosen depends on the fertility of the approach. In view of the principle of fertile plurality, the unity of the concept of history disintegrates: "There is no history of mankind, there is only an indefinite number of histories of all kinds of aspects of human life."<sup>12</sup> In this sense, Popper states categorically: "History has no Meaning".<sup>13</sup>

It stands to reason, however, that Popper himself has *established* the principle of fertile plurality. The question arises whether, in view of man's contingent experience of reality, from which all theories, in whatever field of human experience, are constituted, there is plurality in both the natural and human sciences. But it is a different matter to talk about the *principle* of fertile plurality. This is in itself a human theoretical construction, which assumes a specific meaning, from which general conclusions are drawn. Popper fails to take into account the contingent root of this self-constituted principle, on the grounds of which it has, like any other theoretical constitution, a historical dimension and a controversial character.

### Has History meaning?

Yes it has. It is derived from man's contingent experience of reality. It is from this basic experience of man that, under changing historical conditions, ever new theories in the various fields of human cultural activity are methodologically constituted, yielding different types of knowledge. By virtue of their methodological constitution as theories from specific types of

10. W. Heisenberg. *Das Naturbild der heutigen Physik* (Hamburg, 1955), p. 1.

11. K. Popper. *The Open Society and its Enemies* (London, 1945), pp. 1, 3, iv, 22-24

12. K. Popper. *The Open Society and its Enemies*, pp. 2, 270.

13. K. Popper. *The Open Society and its Enemies*, pp. 2, 25, iv, 269.

experience under changing historical conditions, all these types of knowledge are scientific, thus meaningful. As theories they represent truth-perspectives which enter into a critical relationship with one another, in terms of which the scientific argument in a specific field of knowledge continues. If science were defined as the methodological constitution of various types of knowledge from various types of experience under constantly changing conditions of life (historical conditions) and the needs and interests arising from the conflict experience in the wake of such change, the present one-dimensional science dogma would be overcome and the multi-dimensionality of human experience and human truth would be realized. Since historical truth-perspectives form part of this spectrum, their meaningfulness is thereby given.

It is Hans-Georg Gadamer who, in criticizing the "objective" aspects of truth in German idealism and Dilthey's hermeneutics of *Weltanschauung*, is nearer to our own approach. As regards the meaning of history, he realises that he who studies the subject is always determined by his experience of history.<sup>14</sup> The reason why history is always written anew is because we are determined by history. It is thus not a mere construction of the past. It is in terms of the question, or, more accurately, the relatedness to the question that meaning and understanding emerge. The question is already meaningful and thus points to an underlying Truth or Being. In *Wahrheit und Methode*,<sup>15</sup> Gadamer, in his *Seinsdenken* (contemplation of Being), attempts to elucidate the entire occidental history of thought by taking his starting point from a specific experience of Being, which he also called "metaphysical subjectivity".

The emergence of meaning and understanding in relatedness to the question, which is meaningful in that each question one understands one asks oneself (cf. Heidegger's hermeneutical cycle), holds also true for the natural sciences. Like the aesthetical and historical consciousness, it is based on inner experience. Just as in aesthetical consciousness it is already predetermined which from among the multitude of art works are judged classical (lasting), so in historical consciousness the research results important for our own time will be distinguished from those historical researches, which have no relevance to it. What cannot be doubted is that the great horizon of the past, from which our culture and the present live, has an effect on all that we want, hope and dread for the future.

Gadamer still attempts something, which in the light of man's contingent experience of reality is impossible. By assuming an underlying Being which, ultimately, determines the meaningful question in both the humanities and the natural sciences, he conceives truth not as human truth-perspectives constituted from man's contingent experience of reality, in terms of which all truth-perspectives remain questionable, so that *the* Truth is inaccessible to human understanding. He regards *the* Truth underlying man's meaningful questions, as the starting point, which includes our present culture and science as well as their technological application. It stands to reason that the Truth or Being underlying meaningful questions are bare assumptions. It would appear that Gadamer does not sufficiently appreciate the rational power of the human mind itself, which by the methodological constitution of theories from our contingent experience of reality – by which experience all theories are called in question – lends a rational structure to this experience and conceives meaningful truth perspectives. It seems that Gadamer fails to see that it is the *apriori* component of the mind, which, by the methodological conception of theories from contingent experience, as an experience of basic conflict, renders the world meaningful. It is the method that is the truth-function of theory (knowledge), no matter what type of knowledge, based on whatever type of experience. This means that historical knowledge is one specific type among other types of knowledge. As any

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14. K. Breyzig, *Die Meister der entwickelnden Geschichtsforschung*.

15. H.G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 1965).



type of knowledge, it is methodologically constituted and reconstituted as theories from man's contingent experience of reality. As meaningful truth-perspectives, these theories have subjective and objective significance. Regardless as to whether or not these theories are universally agreed to, they must first be universally understood before agreement or disagreement, thus meaningful argument about the nature of history, is possible. History has meaning in terms of the historical truth-perspectives that are methodologically constituted as theories in the course of this argument, which is carried on under changing historical conditions: man's contingent experience of reality. Thereby the existential character, in this sense practical meaning, of historical theory is demonstrated.<sup>16</sup>

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16. Other works of interest to this topic which have been consulted, are: A. Comte, *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (Paris, 1830-1842); J. Habermas, *Technik und Wissenschaft als "Ideologie"* (Frankfurt/M., 1970); D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London/New York, 1911); E. Kant, *Werke* (Berlin, 1968); N. Machiavelli, *Il Principe* (Oxford, 1891); G.B. Vico, *Tutte le opere di Giambattista Vico* (Milano, 1957); F.M.A. de Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1843).