Has History a Direction?

Philosophical Principles and Objective Interpretations

Essay, Oral Presentation, Reply to Queries, and Commentary

The problem of the direction of history is a counterpart of the problem of the objectivity of philosophy. The relevance of historical accounts to what actually happened depends on the relevance of philosophical formulations to what is actually the case. The question, What happened? may be distinguished from the question, What must happen? and then poetry, which sets forth what might happen, is more universal and philosophical than history; or the questions may coincide, and then the inadequacies and partialities of original history and reflective history find their completion in the necessities and rationalities of philosophical history. The difference between Aristotle and Hegel, however, is a difference of philosophic methods; it is not resolved by appeal to the facts of history or to the narratives of historians. Different kinds of history are determined by different philosophic principles, and the appeal to ‘facts’ and data in support of philosophic ‘concepts’ and conclusions does not provide independent confirmation, since the history is already homogeneous with the philosophy. Hegel and Croce can argue that history is the account of the development of freedom. Other philosophers can argue no less plausibly that history is the account of the accumulations and successions of power; or that it is an account of the conflicts and oppositions of freedom and power; or that it is an account of the interpenetration and transformation of the two. The differences are not differences of direction to the same or different goals, for ‘freedom’ and ‘power’ have different philosophic analyses which give meanings to four views of freedom and which find support in four histories.


Whether history has a direction is a question of the interrelations of philosophic principles and objective interpretations.

History is an account of facts and of connections of facts. Historia meant inquiry and knowledge obtained by inquiry or, since it was probably derived from a verb meaning ‘to see’ in the perfect tense, knowledge of what has been seen. The data of history are selected existential simples, subject to enumeration, but the facts of history are interpreted complexes, stated in propositions. Data are given, but facts are made. There is always a connection in a fact, and there is always a direction in a series of statements of fact. In philosophy or science, inquiry or proof does not always follow the same consequences as the processes it treats. In history, interpretation or account seeks to trace the consequence of occurrences; but the facts depend on choice among connections, and facts are joined to each other in historical consequences only by preserving connections of meaning which are philosophic consequences. Natural history is continuous with human history and divine history. Facts are recorded about inanimate, animate, human, and cosmic things. Human history reflects this continuity: individual actions and social occurrences may evolve their meanings and connections against a transcendental background of intelligibility and reality which gives them an organic unity; or against the background of an underlying material structure—physical nature, human nature, ‘natural law’, relations of economic production—which provide them with ‘elements’ and ‘laws’; or in the context of conditioning circumstances—biological, political, social, cultural—which give them circumstantial particularity; or in an interaction of impulsions and repulsions which give them an operational schema. The report of facts in any of these senses connects data by processes and functions. The direction of history depends on what history is about and how processes are conceived.

History, in one of its forms, treats the subjects and processes which provide the material and structure of the cosmic myths of the ages of man, of his origin and destiny, of the gifts of the gods, and of the development of culture. Analogies are found in the seasons of the year, in the sequence of birth, maturity and decline, in the four (or twenty-one) empires of the world, or in the being of the City of God (or the freedom of the classless society) contrasted to the becoming of the terrestrial city (or the repressions of the political state). This is epochal history, for it moves in ages—Hellenistic, Enlightenment, Baroque,
Romantic, Capitalistic—and each age has unifying characteristics shared by all activities in the age. Art, philosophy, science, commercial organization, geographic exploration, and life, in general, are baroque in a Baroque Age. The direction of history in episcopal histories may follow stages of degradation from a golden age, of advancement to an ultimate utopia, of repeated cycles of initiation, fulfillment, and decay, or of emergence of order from chaos under the impulsion of reason and necessity.

History, in another form, is about processes, not about homogeneous cultural structures, and they are connected in lines of causal sequence, not in lines of organic transformation. The laws determining the sequences are taken from sciences like physics, biology, psychology, politics, economics, or military strategy; and the uniformity of human nature and human actions in all nations and ages takes the place of the uniformity of characters and processes in a people or an age. The basic analogy on which the connections are conceived is power, not culture. This is causal history, for it moves along thin lines of causes to which all other sequences and causes are reduced. The development of a political constitution, or of a philosophy, or of trends of aesthetic taste, of scientific speculation or of social, racial, or intellectual intolerance can, thus, be explained reductively by economic interpretation. Causal history gives prominence to the idea of progress, for some sequences are cumulative or progressive. The direction of history in causal histories may be random or progressive: the causal lines in transfers of political power are necessary, but the direction is random; while the causal lines in the accumulation and application of knowledge yield a direction or progress in knowledge and civilization, but paradoxical problems in the random use of knowledge and civility.

Epochal and causal histories determine the direction of history on patterns of reality which transcend or underlie the facts connected in historical sequences. A third form of history is based on denial that history is about forms or processes as such. History is about facts, and the connections of facts in the sequences of human history are established by the problems men have encountered and the actions they have undertaken to resolve, or to avoid, them. Experience, art and science, dispositions, habits, customs, and institutions supplement nature and natural ability as instrumentalities in the solution of problems. Human history is the account of problem-solving and of the development of means of solving problems. This is disciplinary history, for it moves from the solution of a problem to the utilization of what has been learned, and to the formation of new disciplines, to the solution of problems which arise from the solution or failure to solve the prior problem. Disciplinary history is used in histories of constitutions and institutions and in histories of arts and sciences. Polybius' history of the development of the Roman constitution and the peripatetic histories of the sciences in antiquity have been extended to other institutions and other disciplines in later disciplinary histories. The direction of history in disciplinary histories opens out like a fan at each juncture, for the solution of a problem is not an end of the historical process but the opening up of new problems some of which will be treated in deliberative and purposive activities, and problems which are ignored or not solved are likewise the source of new problems.

A final form of history is about acts, not facts, and the connections of acts is in their force in determining the actions of other agents or in their influence as models for modes of action employed. History teaches by examples drawn from the actions of great men and the operations of adaptable institutions. This is exemplary history, for the hero is recognized by all men despite differences in their cultures, in their scientific analyses, or in their problematic perspectives, and the balanced constitution provides for problems unanticipated in its formation; examples of both heroes and institutions move from one historical context to another. Machiavelli went to history in *The Prince* for the example of great rulers, like Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus, in the interest of the unification of Italy, and to the history of Livy in *The Discourses* for the example of the division of powers in the constitution of Rome in the interest of the formation of republican virtues. The direction of history in exemplary history is determined by random interplays of external forces until they are coordinated by the initiative of a great man, or of a man who follows his example, or by an institution which brings powers into limitations and balances for productive operation.

The direction of history is discovered neither *a priori* nor empirically. It is neither an abstract imposition nor an objective observation. It is determined by philosophic principle and empirical fact much as philosophy itself is, and therefore, since philosophy too has a history, the history of philosophy is one of the least ambiguous examples of the direction of history. In epochal histories of philosophy, later ages synthesize the antitheses of previous philosophers. The historical sequence...
is cumulative, and the historian of philosophy seeks to preserve and develop in his history what was valid and efficacious in the contradictory philosophies of earlier antagonists. The tasks of philosophy and of the history of philosophy are fundamentally the same. In causal histories of philosophy, the whole of knowledge was once philosophy, and the historical sequence is the separation of the sciences one by one—mathematics, physics, biology, psychology, and the social sciences—from that whole. In any age, including our own, philosophy is the remnant of problems as yet unsolved or by nature insoluble. The history of philosophy is not directly relevant to the solution of philosophic problems. It is an account of how problems ceased to be philosophic when scientific methods were devised for them and of non-philosophic reasons why philosophers considered meaningless problems and made odd or even absurd statements. In disciplinary histories of philosophy, the sequence of problems and of hypotheses for their solution is set forth. The philosopher may learn from the history of philosophy about past mistakes which he might otherwise repeat unaware that they had been shown false and past successes which he might otherwise fail to utilize in the formation of his own hypotheses. With the aid of history, progress may be made in the consideration of continuing or evolving philosophic problems. In exemplary histories of philosophy, the careers and achievements of great philosophers are set forth. They may open up the meaning and use of philosophy to a philosopher or a beginner who contemplates them, and they may teach him to pose his problems better and more completely by asking himself how Plato or Aristotle or William of Ockham or Spinoza or Kant would have framed them.

The example of the history of philosophy makes clear that the problem of the direction of history must be considered in two contexts or orientations. Since the facts of history depend on the philosophic principles according to which they are formulated, questions of the direction of history must be raised within the context of a single conception of history if they are to have objective meaning. To ask how the several conceptions are related to each other is to raise questions about the semantics of history, not about the directions of history. On the other hand, since the data of history are subject to formulation as facts according to any of these conceptions, history itself and historical narratives exhibit many conceptions of history and many directions.

In the first context or orientation, the directions of history must be differentiated and joined to their relevant philosophic principles. If you are interested in the problem of time, or of the criteria of truth and verification, or of the grounds of moral judgment and if you seek an account of past treatments of those problems and of past discussions of their adequacies and inadequacies, you will find that only in disciplinary histories of philosophy. If you are interested in the evolution from scholastic to baroque conceptions of time, you may find it treated in an epochal history which sets forth the evolution of thought from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century. If you are interested in the transformation of the concept of time when it was put to scientific uses and analyses by Galileo and Huyghens, you should go to a causal history of philosophy. If you are interested in breaking from the aridities and abstractions of contemporary philosophies of experience and existence, you might see inspiration in the contemplation of how great philosophers faced like problems in an exemplary history of philosophy.

Once you have found the answer to the particular question adapted to your own philosophic preferences and commitments, however, you would do well to move to the second context or orientation. Philosophy is an enterprise carried out in all the philosophic formulations conceived by philosophers, and it has directions determined by all the objectives proper to those formulations—to new structures of reality and thought, to new truths and demonstrations, to new resolutions of old and new problems, and to new innovations of statement and action. Your problem in this context is not to decide which among these directions is truly the direction; your problem is to consider how the various movements and directions, which philosophy is asserted to have, may be made more effective by philosophic analysis and statement based on examination of their interaction on each other as supplementary and as mutually reinforcing rather than as contradictory and mutually exclusive. The directions of the history of philosophy are particularizations of the directions of history. The fruitful use of the directions of history, as mutually contradictory and mutually supplementary, is a particularization of philosophic problems of philosophic principles and objective interpretations.

R. P. McKeon:
The printed version of my communication, Has History a Direction? Philosophical Principles and Objective Interpretations, has been distributed. I shall not try to outline its contents. Instead, by way of introduc-
tion to the problems of the direction of history, I should like to discuss
three questions. In the first place, I shall explain how I came to conceive
the ‘direction’ of history as I do in my paper. We are now in the third
day of our discussions, and I shall therefore explain the distinctions
which I make in my paper by applying them to problems which have
emerged in the last two days. In the second place, having stated the
problem of the direction of history and having distinguished it from
the problems of the philosophy of history, I shall examine the dis-tin-
ciation between historical data and historical facts, and the structure of the
distinctions which I use in treating historical facts. In the third place, I
shall state briefly some important problems of history and of philos-
ophy which arise from these considerations and which I hope to intro-
duce into discussion.

My first subject is the problem itself. As you know, the Organizing
Committee made a distribution of subjects. I found that it was neces-
sary to make an adjustment or interpretation of my assignment when I
began to prepare my paper. My reason for this apparent deviation is
simple. I received two letters from the Organizing Committee, one in
English, the other in French. The letter in English stated the problem:
‘Does history have a meaning?’ My immediate answer to this question
was ‘No’. The letter in French stated the problem: ‘L’histoire, a-t-elle
un sens?’ My answer to this question was ‘Yes’. My two answers were
not contradictory. They were, rather, a recognition of the problem
which we face. The problem is not either of the two questions inter-
preted as if they were unambiguous. If the letter in English had stated
the problem: ‘Does history have a sense?’ I might have discovered that
basic problem in the pun on the word ‘sense’, but in French the two
meanings were perfectly apparent.

For philosophic purposes the two meanings and the two questions
open up the basic problem of the relation between two approaches to
history. My two answers to the questions were recognition of the fun-
damental opposition of two approaches. But both approaches to his-
tory have been widespread in history and in philosophy, and the rela-
tion between them poses a philosophic problem which might be lost in
a clash of controversial preferences in which one is taken to be true and
the other false.

The first approach to history has been all but pervasive in our dis-
cussions of the last two days. It is an approach in which la conscience
historique is fundamental precisely because only human deeds and ac-
complishments have a history. The other approach to history has been
at least as widespread, but it has had fewer proponents among us to
defend it against the first. It is an approach in which what occurs is
viewed as events and movements, which are interpreted by human
beings and arranged in orders appropriate to their interpretations. The
meanings which men associate with events, and which influence their
actions, give history a direction which is alleged as basic for the mean-
ings. When I came to see this problem of the relation of different ap-
proaches to history, it seemed to me that my answer to the ambiguous
question should not be thrown into the form it would take in one or
the other of these two approaches. In other words, since I could now
see the fashion in which history has a meaning, the philosophic prob-
lem of the meaning of history could not be treated adequately by lim-
iting my consideration of it to the approach to history which I use in
my historical studies—and which I think is most frequently used by
English-speaking historians—in which history, strictly speaking, does
not have a meaning. Since I wished to make provisions for both ap-
proaches to history I called my paper, ‘Does history have a direction?’
The direction of history may take the form of a direction which is in-
terpreted into a meaning or of a direction which is already a meaning.

How should the problem of the relation of the meaning and the
direction of history be stated philosophically, if it is a problem which
can not be stated within the limitations of one set of philosophic prin-
ciples or in the language of one philosophy? If history has a direction,
its meaning should be observable in the ‘facts’ of history; its discovery
should not depend on viewing those ‘facts’ according to an antecedent philos-
ophy of history. Delineation of the direction of history should be pro-
paedetic to the construction of structures of narrative accounts by historians, or
structures of disputative argument by philosophers of history, for both
structures have their bases in commitments to philosophic principles.
Two tendencies operate to give the direction of history a meaning; to
separate and relate them I proposed to discuss the meaning and direc-
tion of history by considering ‘Philosophical Principles and Objective
Interpretations’, as is indicated by the subtitle appended to the ques-
tion, ‘Does History have a Direction?’ The perception and even the
indication of a direction depends on no appeal to philosophic prin-
ciples; the presentation or account of movements of motivated people
in directions which they observe, plan, and oppose depends on prin-
ciples of selection, interpretation, and sequential inference which push
back to philosophic principles. The objectivity of an historical account does not consist in the reproduction in statement of facts of occurrence: historical facts no less than narrative accounts of facts are selected and constituted; and the justification of the interpretation of what was the case and the account of what it was that occurred—the whether and the what—both depend on principles.

The two approaches to history which I have detected in our discussions are particular forms of these two tendencies. In both, philosophic principles are used to determine and to order facts. Statement of fact and interpretation of fact may be distinguished analytically, but they are not separate parts of a narrative or account; and therefore an approach to history is usually presented, not as an approach to, but as the nature of, history. The approach is forgotten or assimilated to the facts; the measure becomes part of the nature of the measured. In the opposition of the approaches, each is presented by its proponents as a statement of demonstrable and inevitable facts. Therefore the opposition is not resolved by interpretation but by appeal to the fact. According to the one approach, it is a fact that man is a natural being in a natural world. Human nature is a source and explanation of actions in a natural world which is the environment of man and the setting for his actions. History is the account of his actions and of events that affect them or follow from them. According to the other approach, only men have a history and a sense of history and this reflexivity of history which limits it to beings which perceive it, prevents the extension of ‘history’ from human beings, human intentions, and human realizations to natural history, natural functions and circumstances, and natural events. If the problem of the meaning and direction of history is to be considered, neither of these approaches can be taken as natural and inevitable, for the problem arises from the relations of the two. The principles which I take to be natural in my philosophical and historical studies could not be used as the ordering principles of my inquiry concerning the direction of history: those principles and other principles alleged to be natural are the subject of inquiry. Other distinctions are needed to order the principles, methods, and interpretations of philosophies. The fundamental distinctions which I use for that purpose are set forth and elaborated in my paper. I shall not repeat what I said in applying them; but an explanation of how they are derived and established may make clear their bearing on the problems we are now discussing.

My second subject grows out of the statement of the problem. Two sets of distinctions are needed to treat the problem of the meaning and direction of history, one to relate the data of historical experience to the facts of historical inquiry, another to distinguish the different forms of historical inquiry and the kinds of facts which are discovered and employed in each of the forms.

History does not occur in a world of pre-existent ready-made facts, constituted to fit metaphysical orders or epistemological forms and ideas. History is evolved from unordered or accidentally ordered immediate experiences. Experiences and testimonies of experience are the data, the given, with which the historian begins. How does a historian who inquires into and writes about the history of the Peloponnesian War or the history of the French Revolution or the history of Democratic Institutions or the history of Logic place himself with respect to his data and with respect to other actual or possible accounts of the processes and relations he investigates in treating his data? If he is writing a history of the Peloponnesian War he will share common data with other historians of that war, but he undertakes his history because he thinks the data have not been treated properly, or adequately, or truly. His history will treat common historical data, but present distinctive historical facts.

Several steps may be distinguished in the evolution of facts from data and in the differentiation of different histories of a common subject. First, there is a common conception which identifies the historical experiences which are the subject of investigation and presentation. The subject is the Peloponnesian War. It is an ambiguous conception defined by a rough circle drawn among data. The circle encloses an indefinitely large number of data from which an indefinitely large number of facts and connections may be discovered and formed. Second, each historian makes his selection among the data of the ambiguously identified subject. Data are not facts stated in propositions, but simples designated or named. The data are indicated persons, places, relations, events, concepts. They are not truths but categorical elements or commonplaces which may be used in the statement of facts. Third, statements of fact are constructed from the data. Data are the materials related in statements; they are presented in statements of alleged facts. Data as simples, are neither true nor false, and the presentation of truths about data is the transmutation of data into facts. Fourth, the
order of facts in sequences of occurrences or of discourse is the jus-
tification and verification of allegations of fact. It is only at this point
that the direction or meaning of history emerges.

The principles of history and of philosophy are guiding principles in
this transition from the ambiguously designated common data of ex-
perience to the unambiguously specified facts of an historical account.
They are principles of exploration or manifestation, of selection or dis-
covery, of establishment or verification, and of coherency or justifica-
tion. The principles of philosophy account for the evolution of facts
from data, but not for the differentiation of particular histories which
make common data by giving different accounts of different facts. To
relate two approaches to historical research, distinctions are needed
which are not distorted by commitment to one of the philosophies
distinguished. The differentiation of the common data of experience
and the specific facts of accounts of occurrences provides such a dis-
tinction. Two histories of the Peloponnesian War are both about the
Peloponnesian War. But the available data relevant even to an event
long past and known through only a few surviving documents and ma-
terial remains is indefinitely large, and new historians with ingenuity
will always be able to find new data and new approaches to the ambigu-
ous common data they share with other historians of the common
subject. Different historians use different selections from the data; and
since the possibilities of selection are infinite, they will sometimes state
different facts and sometimes the same facts, interpreted in the same
way or differently, even to the extreme possibility of two histories of
the same subject which select totally different facts. Moreover, when
they differ, the different accounts are not necessarily in contradiction,
for a common fact interpreted differently is no longer a single fact;
statement and denial of it are equivocal, not contradictory, and it is
possible that both are true.

Any statement of the relation of the data of historical experience to
the facts of historical inquiry and historical narration must reflect the
inescapable ambiguity of 'data' and 'facts', even in meticulously precise
statements, for precisions of definition and meaning are introduced,
step by step, into inchoate materials and ambiguous statements. Our
statement of the relation began with the demarcation of a common
experience which was the potential source of infinite data, proceeded
to different selections of actual data by different historians, to the com-
position of the respective data of the different histories into facts and
statements of facts, and to the ordering of facts and statements into
sequences of occurrences and discourse. As the ambiguities are re-
moved, it becomes increasingly difficult, and eventually impossible, to
express the distinction in philosophically neutral language. The ques-
tion of meaning or direction therefore intrudes itself unavoidably at the
fourth step when sequences of facts and statements are discovered and
ordered. Ambiguity is congenial to discussion and research; precision
promotes opposition and controversy. Consequently, when the com-
mon experience which the different histories shared as data is reviewed
from the standpoint of the ordered sequence of the facts of a history or
the truths of a philosophy, the ambiguous common data have shrunk
to the particular data selected in the facts of the particular history and
its philosophy. The same shrinking occurs in the common data which
different philosophies share: once we begin to introduce some philo-
sophic precision into statements about the 'common experience' inves-
tigated by different historians, we must decide what its status is and
how it should be understood and described, and we are on the edge of
philosophic controversy. Is it a common experience or a common series
of events or a common sequence of statements or a common structure
of meanings and values?

I do not think that we did justice yesterday to what Mr. Nikam said
about recorded history. History as it enters our experiences and re-
searches is not a brute fact or a collection of determinate facts. It is data
known and conceived as a series of events only because they are stated;
and in historical statements, of source documents or of historical ac-
counts, facts are recorded facts. If the facts recorded are altered or ques-
tioned in interpretation and restatement, the change is justified by an-
other record, including the record of the historian stating his
interpretation of what took place. Whether the common element of the
various accounts or interpretations is a common experience or a com-
mon series of events or a common sequence of statements or a common structure of meanings and values is a philosophical problem, which is
faced by both historians and philosophers. To treat it requires the sec-
ond set of distinctions, not between the data of experience and the facts
stated in accounts of experience, but between the different forms of
historical inquiry and the different kinds of facts that are relevant and
definitive in each. The two approaches to history which I detected in
our discussions may be placed in the matrix of the four forms of history
which I construct in my paper. The four forms of history are not liter-
ally description as a catalogue of all actual and possible modes of historical inquiry and statement, but they are formally exhaustive as a matrix in which numberless particular approaches may be interpreted by specifying subdivisions under the four forms. I shall use the four forms of history in order to differentiate four answers to the questions, What has a history? How is the direction of history discovered? and What is the meaning or significance given to history?

One form of history seeks the meaning and direction of history in structures of meanings and values. History in classical dialectical philosophies was identified with myth, and we have rediscovered in our time the importance of interpreting myths to understand past civilizations and cultures. The transition from mythical narrative to dialectical argument is easy and natural—they are supplementary statements of the same truths; they are homogeneous statements of meanings and values. In history, meanings and values provide the connections and perspectives of sequences and synchronisms. I have called this form of history 'epochal history' because synchronous events and purposive activities share the common characteristics which define an 'age', and the sequences of history are successions of ages. History and philosophy employ different devices to set forth the same meanings and values: the complete history of an idea or an institution is the same as the philosophical analysis of it. Hegel emphasized this equivalence and made effective historical and philosophical use of it. There have been many modern epochal histories since those of Hegel and Marx, influenced by them or in reaction against them, but there were epochal histories before Hegel, in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern period. The approach to history which makes use of the epochal conception of the meaning of history and historical consciousness has been espoused repeatedly in the course of our discussions. But the dialectical equivalence of history and philosophy, which seems obvious and natural in epochal history, does not hold for any of the other approaches to history. I have questioned its extension to history as such, while recognizing its meaning and appropriateness in epochal history.

The second form of history has also been espoused or assumed in our discussions. In this form history is a sequence of events, of occurrences, and therefore of movements. The causal sequences are determined by causal laws which fix the order and direction of the sequences, and the laws of motion are often stated in sciences like politics, psychology, economics, or military science. I have called this form of history 'causal history'. Nature and human nature have important functions in causal history. The sequences of human attitudes and activities are kinds of motions, and the meanings of history depend on the motions and orientations of speech and thought, including the choice which the historian makes of the laws of motion which will govern his account of historical occurrences. Hume's observation, that to know how ancient Greeks or Romans acted one has only to consider how modern Frenchmen or Englishmen act, is an appeal to the common laws of human nature which are unchanged from antiquity to the present. The motions of bodies and human bodies environing a man are known and interpreted by the motions and associations of ideas and emotions in the man.

Since the case for causal history has not been stated as emphatically in our discussions as the case for epochal history, let me analyse two examples of this approach. Paradoxically the historians who have used this form of history have stated its philosophical principles clearly, while the philosophers who have defended it have been clear in their use of historical data. I shall therefore choose an ancient historian and an ancient philosopher. Thucydides says at the end of the first book of the Peloponnesian War that he will seek to state the real causes of the war and that he will place those causes in the context of the grounds alleged. The underlying causes, what really happened, were affected by what men thought and said. Therefore Book One is devoted to tracing the development of a unity and a community in Hellas, and after its emergence to the development of the power of Hellas. But the sequence of events is not limited to oppositions of power and the action and reaction of forces. The Lacedaemonians were alarmed by the growth of power of Athens, and the speeches play an important part in forming the alignments, deciding on policies, and initiating the actions which led to hostilities. In the fifth book of the De Rerum Natura Lucretius gives a cultural history of the world. It begins with the nature and origin of the world, goes on to the development of vegetable life and living creatures, then to man and the development of his mode of living from the solitary life of primitive man through the stages of civilization—fire, clothes, and shelter, the beginnings of language by experimentation, the discovery of gold, the institution of government and laws, the origin of religion and the development of metals, the cultivation of the arts and of civilization and warfare.

The third form of history has its philosophical basis in the denial of
the forms of epochal history and the matter of causal history. When Aristotle abandoned the ideas of Plato and the atoms of Democritus, he continued to use history as an inquiry into facts. His History of Animals is a history, his Constitution of Athens is a history of the development of the constitution and the institutions of Athens; he prefaced many of his treatises with a history of the science and of the problems he proposes to treat. The direction of history is fixed by the problems men have treated, the solutions found, and the further problems faced as a result of those steps. The meaning of history is encountered in the present problems which have resulted from the cumulative, cyclic, or fortuitous attention given to problems and their past solutions and ensuing consequences. Common experience includes problematic situations. The available means to solve problems, like the problems themselves, is determined by historical, social, and cultural circumstances. I have called this form of history ‘disciplinary history’. Disciplinary history includes ‘natural history’ in sciences which begin with an inventory and ordering of natural facts. It includes ‘constitutional’ histories of political institutions, like Aristotle’s Constitution of Athens, the sixth book of The Histories of Polybius, Fustel de Coulanges’ History of the Political Institutions of Ancient France, and Maitland’s Constitutional History of England. It includes histories of the arts and sciences, which took their origin in the peripatetic histories of biology, psychology, poetry and the organization of the arts and sciences of the Hellenistic period. It is a history of facts and functions, of problems and resolutions, of the formation and operation of habits and institutions, of the formation of kinds of things and kinds of associations and the mutual adaptation of their parts.

The fourth form of history is based on phenomena without recourse to prior metaphysical entities—form, matter, or essence, idea, body, or substance. The account of history and the argument of philosophy treat a subject matter which is made, and they interpret it in the perspective of the agent or the interpreter. The ‘facts’ of history are ‘acts’—deeds and words, facta and verba. There is a cultural history of mankind in Plato’s dialogue Protagoras in which the sophist who conceived man as the measure, that is, the maker, of all things, presents history as it is made by gods and men. The facts of Protagoras’ cultural history are different from those of Lucretius’ but the common data are the same: the origin of the world and of man is traced to the actions of the gods rather than to the motion of bodies, and the stages of the acquisition

of the arts are not presented as the acquisition of powers over kinds of things and of motions but as the formation of skills to satisfy needs and to build security. Prometheus gave man wisdom in the arts and the art of fire; Zeus gave him wisdom in daily life and in civil life. Men acquired religion, articulate speech, skill in inventing shelters, clothing, and food; they also acquired civic art, including the art of warfare, and justice, temperance, and law. Rhetoric has played a prominent place in the development of history. The disciples of Isocrates wrote histories; and Cicero, at the beginning of his dialogue The Laws, makes the transition from the discussion of political constitutions in the Republic to the consideration of political institutions in the Laws by way of a discussion of history and poetry in which he recounts the arguments of his friend Atticus and his brother Quintus urging him to write the history of Rome because history is closer than any other branch of literature to oratory. I have called this form of history ‘exemplary history’. The example is the basic method of argumentation in deliberative oratory. Past actions are a guide and a source of discovery in planning future actions, and the orator forms himself by following the words and actions of great orators as models. The direction of history is determined by planning and prediction, and the meaning of history is found in the actions undertaken to achieve desired ends.

My third subject grows out of the differentiation of kinds of historical facts. If facts were given unambiguously, the problems of historical objectivity would be problems of fitting statements to facts, and philosophical principles would have a simple relation in history to objective interpretations. But if fixed facts are formed from ambiguous data, and if historical accounts select a finite number of facts from the infinite possibilities of data and justify one interpretation among numerous possible interpretations, philosophic principles have a wider function than providing the rules for matching statements to facts, for facts must be determined as well as statements, and the determination of the two are closely interrelated. Two problems should be distinguished. Since ‘fact’ has many meanings and since each of the facts alleged in statement has a like number of meanings, the different kinds of facts should be distinguished: this is the problem of philosophic semantics. Since what is a fact and what is relevant in one form of history is dubious or false, irrelevant or misleading, in another form of history, the methods of verification, justification, demonstration, and systematization in history should be examined in the light of the diversity of methods disclosed
by philosophic semantics: this is the problem of philosophic inquiry.

The application of philosophic semantics to the facts of history is apparent from the sketch of the four forms of history. Facts are structures of meanings and value; or they are motions of bodies; or they are functions of natures and institutions; or they are actions of formation and opposition; and each of the four varieties of facts may be used in a variety of ways in historical accounts. In any of them, allegations of fact may be shown to be mistaken, and criteria of objectivity and truth are available for use. But the facts of one form of history are not facts in another form: their relations are not relations of contradiction or falsification but of ambiguity or irrelevance. The relations among the facts of the different forms of history may be illustrated by an example from intellectual history. If one is interested in the history of 'time', one may find it treated in a variety of histories of thought and culture. Epochal histories will sometimes include a presentation of the 'classical', or the 'baroque', or the 'modern' conception of time in their delineation of the characteristics of such ages. Causal histories sometimes trace the evolution of the use of time in the analysis of motion and the development of instruments of precision in the measurement of time. Disciplinary histories sometimes set forth different conceptions of time, problems presented by each, and their resolution in new conceptions of time with new problems. Exemplary histories sometimes set forth the creative readjustments in which a great thinker transforms, as Galileo, Newton, and Einstein did, the approach to and formulas of motion and the concept of time. Since philosophic semantics applies to the ideas of philosophy as well as the facts of history, a philosopher who goes to history for factual confirmation of his ideas usually has little difficulty in finding that the facts support him, since he takes to his history the same philosophic semantics as guided him in his philosophy.

The application of philosophic inquiry to the ideas and methods of history has in the past opened up new perspectives of historical inquiry. The problems of the meaning and direction of history today, the problems of facts and interpretations, have new dimensions and complexities which are the proper subjects of philosophic inquiry. The multiplicities of meanings of historical fact disclosed by philosophic semantics have appeared in philosophic discussion in the past primarily as a controversial opposition of schools. The cultural history of the world has moved through these oppositions, and continuous themes have emerged which provide the common context of the disputations and the continuous links to the stages of evolution and progress. The themes are not of battles and refutations but of meanings and amplifications. They depend on communication rather than debate. The cultures of the world have entered into universal communication which involves in turn contacts of the philosophies of the world, past and present. It is not a simple opposition of cultures or of philosophies. A pluralism of cultures and a pluralism within cultures are increasingly apparent and operative. The simple opposition of a spiritualistic East and a materialistic West loses its persuasive power when one places spiritualism and materialism in their context in East and West. In Greece the voluminous writings of Democritus have all but disappeared and we know about his materialistic philosophy from the refutations of his adversaries and a few fragments of his works. In India the early materialistic philosophy of the Carvakas suffered the same fate. The communication among cultures is not a clash of opposed meanings and values but a broadening to world scale of alternatives and oppositions which had formed the philosophic basis of interpretation and motivation in each of the major cultures. The facts of history and the directions of accounts of facts differ because they are selections based on a diversity of philosophic grounds, but they are selections from common data, and the inquiries of philosophy and of history take place in a common social and cultural context. The ambiguous themes which cross from one sequence to another in occurrence and discourse and provide the continuities of problems of inquiry and discussion are possible sources of insight by which to enrich our penetration into historical facts and our realization of the possibilities of action. If the apparent oppositions of direction and meaning in history which result from oppositions of the forms of histories and their facts, were clarified by philosophic semantics, historical inquiry could turn to the real complementarities which are found in the pluralism of historical forms and could explore the themes to which the various accounts are specifications and particularizations.

R. P. McKeon:

I am grateful to the speakers who have reflected on what I have written. I am grateful both because they have suggested ideas to me and also because their remarks have illustrated the pluralism which I have found in philosophical speculations concerning history. I want consequently
to take advantage of both aspects of their interventions in my reply, to
develop the ideas they suggest and to place their criticisms in the con-
text of my treatment of the direction of history. In so doing, I shall try
to rectify some of the statements attributed to me and some of the
statements made in interpretation of what I have said, and I shall try to
show how the resulting distinctions are broad enough to include treat-
ment of the issues that have been raised.

First, Mr. Van Breda has raised a question concerning degrees of
objectivity in history. I have argued that the problem of discovering
what is objective is extremely difficult, whether objectivity is sought in
science or in history or, finally, in philosophy. I have not, however,
advanced or defended a relativism. I have not suggested or held that
whatever is said is necessarily true. Data are before us, and facts can be
discovered and established by methods which make use of criteria sub-
ject to explicit statement and rational criticism. What one seeks and
finds as a fact does not depend on one’s preferences; it does however
depend on one’s philosophic assumptions, and these include one’s as-
sumptions about the nature of things and the nature of human actions.
Such assumptions direct one’s attention to what is observed and no-
ticed. The observation is guided by principles, but it is not determined
eclusively by principles. I have stated, and I have argued in defense of
the statement, that there is a direction in history but that direction or
meaning can neither be perceived a priori and imposed on historical
occurrences nor be discovered empirically and derived without assump-
tions from historical occurrences. Consequently, my reply to Mr. Van
Breda is that each of the many kinds of history, which I treated under
four heads, seeks objectivity in a different way. It is important that dis-
tinctions be made among different criteria of objectivity because what
is objective fact in one historical account is not objective or a fact in
another: if the alleged fact is considered at all, and it may be omitted
without mention because it is irrelevant, it is shown to be fantastic,
mythical, abstract, or simply untrue.

Let me run through the criteria of objectivity employed in the four
forms of history. Hegel wrote epochal history. In the Philosophy of His-
tory, he distinguished three methods of treating history: original his-
tory, reflective history, and philosophical history. In philosophic his-
tory, history in the true sense emerges for the first time. The philosophy
of history is nothing but the thoughtful contemplation of history. In
causal history this is nonsense. History is concerned with events and
actions as they are and as they have been, and any reflection or contem-
plation of what has happened must be based on an objective account of
the events. In the epochal history of Hegel, objectivity is encountered
because reason is the law of the world and things have come about
rationally in world history. The positions of many of the speakers in
our discussion have made use of a conception of objectivity close to
Hegel’s. In causal history, objectivity is encountered in occurrences,
perceived and observed clearly, and in sequences, justified and tested by
notions or laws of motion and process and of cause and effect. In disci-
plinary history, objectivity is encountered in the discovery of facts:
natural facts in natural history; facts of habits and institutions, second
natures which are sources of future actions, in political and social his-
tory; facts of thought and creation in intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural
history. Objectivity is attained in disciplinary history by avoiding the
accidental and discovering the continuing sources of future action. In
exemplary history, objectivity is the result of action. The results of the
actions of great men, of heroes, of groups of men, and of nations are
objective, and in exemplary history one can learn from history by tak-
ing the accounts of past deeds as models to guide one’s future actions.

Mr. Polin suggests that the four forms of history that I distinguish
are not philosophies of history, but should be called philosophies about
history and be related to a philosophy of history. In the third part of
my oral report I argued that questions of philosophic semantics should
be distinguished from questions of philosophic inquiry. From the se-
monic point of view, there are as many ‘philosophies of history’ as there
are meanings attached to the words ‘history’ and ‘philosophy’, that is,
there are as many philosophies of history as there are intelligible phi-
osophies or defensible histories. My distinction of four forms of his-
tory is a semantic differentiation of four kinds of history based on four
sets of broad philosophic assumptions. Philosophic inquiry is under-
taken by use of one set of philosophic assumptions, chosen among pos-
sible approaches to philosophic problems and, therefore, in opposition
to other possible philosophies. The pluralism of approaches to philos-
ophy disclosed by philosophic semantics usually yields controversial
oppositions among philosophies in philosophic inquiry. The alternative
to controversy in a pluralism is not synthesis but communication or
dialogue. In controversy the assumptions of the alternative approach
are denied and the facts supporting the assumptions are questioned; in
discussion the consequences of the alternative assumptions are exam-
ined for the light which they throw on facts not considered under one's own assumptions. The semantics of philosophy and of history convinces me that no inclusive agreed-on synthesis or mélange or syncretism is possible. If one is engaged on causal history, one cannot pause to do a little epochal history of the age, a little institutional disciplinary history, or a little exemplary sketch of a great man for emulation. But one can treat the facts bearing on the character of an age, the operation of a constitution, and the actions of influential men by breaking them up into elements which fit in the causal lines one traces and which are reducible to the causal laws which govern the sequences of occurrence.

The semantics of history, moreover, suggests the answer to the question whether the forms of history should be called 'philosophies of history' or 'philosophies about history'. 'Philosophy of history' has a proper and strict sense only in dialectical philosophy and epochal history. I used it in that sense when I sketched Hegel's philosophy of history. The other three forms of history are opposed to a philosophy of history in the dialectical sense. I myself am not a dialectician, and it was for this reason that I dwelt on the causal form of history in which history does not have a meaning and philosophy does not have a separate branch, or philosophy of history, devoted to contemplation of that meaning. Philosophy has a function in the other three forms of history, but they do not have philosophies of history in the dialectical sense. Whether 'philosophy of history' is given other senses applicable to the uses of philosophy in these forms of history or whether other expressions like 'philosophy for history' are found for them is a matter of indifference, provided it is not assumed that one over-riding dialectical philosophy of history is the point of reference and the ground of more limited philosophies about history, or that the principles of the philosophies about history can be synthesized in one common philosophy of history. There are four forms of history, not merely because of differences in ways in which accounts of what has occurred are written, but also because of differences in the facts and relations and sequences which constitute the historical processes which the historian investigates and recounts. Our problem is how these different sets of facts and processes have fitted together in the past, how they eventuate in the present, and how they provide background for our understanding of the ongoing world of the future.

I have already replied in part to Mr. Aubenque's accusation of relativism in answering Mr. Van Breda's question about objectivity. There are facts, and facts are the object of inquiry; but there are many methods and devices by which to determine what the facts are, and the facts stated in any account of an occurrence or a subject are selections from an indefinitely large number of facts which can be discovered, formulated, and constructed from the common data of inquiry. The pluralism which I presented is a pluralism of different conceptions of fact, not a pluralism of allegations of fact indifferendy accepted as true. This pluralism is recognized in the words which have been used in antiquity (pragma, facta) and in the modern languages (fait, Tatsache, Tat, Handlung, fact). A fact is something done or made. It is not something made arbitrarily. Facts have objective bases, but they are determined by active and inquiring minds. They do not exist preformed like grains in a pile of sand. They take on their characteristics in the process of inquiry, and the facts available to an inquirer at one time and in one set of cultural circumstances may be different from those known and recognized by his predecessors or successors.

Mr. Aubenque has asked me what the proper task of philosophy is. My answer is based on consideration of the tasks undertaken in the history of philosophy and the tasks undertaken by philosophers today. Philosophy has had and still has many proper tasks. I have a conception of the proper task of philosophy based on my conception of the principles and methods of philosophy. That is philosophy as I engage in it, but it would seem to me improper and arrogant for me to say from that philosophic point of view what other philosophers, particularly those who do not share my philosphic orientation, should undertake in philosophy. There have been many revolutions in philosophy, including several in the twentieth century. In my youth, there was a revolution against idealism in the United States and England, and the proper task of philosophy became some form of realistic philosophy; and realisms merged into naturalisms, neo-positivism, neo-scholasticisms, and linguistic analyses. There was another revolution against psychologism in which the proper task of philosophy became phenomenology which merged into various forms of existentialism. There have been controversies among all these tendencies, in which the opposition against predecessors and opponents has been that they do not engage in the proper task of philosophy but ask meaningless questions. The proper task of philosophy, it seems to me, is not to make one conception of the task of philosophy prevail until all philosophers share it, but rather to understand the different tasks which philosophers have meaningfully
Mr. Aubenque says that I propose a synthesis. The opposite is the case. I have argued that a synthesis of diverse philosophic approaches is impossible and that even an eclecticism is impossible. All philosophers quote from other philosophers and use their predecessors and contemporaries in their own arguments. But positions are transformed in restatement, favourable or unfavourable; the most devoted disciple departs from the teaching of the master, and the synthesis of two positions is a third independent position even when the joining is done with little originality. I have argued that philosophers remain faithful to their approaches and methods, except when they contradict themselves, and that we should therefore seek a clearer understanding of our philosophic assumptions and those of others. We can understand the task of philosophy in that context. Instead of saying, what I am doing is the proper task of philosophy, one may take into account what other philosophers are doing and the facts which are brought to light by their approaches, and one may then be able to raise questions which one would not otherwise consider and open up the way to discussion and cooperative inquiry. Scientists frequently make such use of pluralism of approaches to the statement and treatment of problems. The cooperative volume Albert Einstein—Philosopher-Scientist edited by Paul Schilpp contains the story of a group of scientists who differed radically in their basic scientific and philosophic principles and who used their differences to make crucial contributions to the development of quantum physics. Their opposed principles provided alternative hypotheses. If they had conducted their discussions in the manner of the discussion of philosophers at the time, they would have accused each other of talking nonsense. Instead they applied their opposed hypotheses to investigate the facts and relations relevant to them. Discoveries made according to one hypothesis could be recognized to be true by the proponents of the opposed hypothesis, but to be in need of restatement and reinterpretation, which in turn led to new problems and the discovery of new facts. This is philosophic communication without synthesis, as opposed to philosophic controversy in the interest of establishing a synthesis.

Mr. Aubenque has raised specific questions concerning the history of philosophy. Does the history of philosophy have a unity and a reality in itself which imposes itself on us? Are we the creatures of our time?
Chapter Six

Has History a Direction?

They ran through the history of philosophic positions on problems ranging from those of psychology, animal life, and sense perception through reason, memory, and language to liberty and habit.

Mr. Arieli's second question is concerning the effect on the objectivity of history of using present conceptual frameworks and even new ideas in treating what happened in the past and in understanding what was thought of in different frameworks and without awareness of ideas which were to develop later in history. I have argued that many different frameworks are used by historians in the present and that a like plurality was operative in the past. I have therefore argued that the dialectical philosophy of history should not be treated as if it were a universal philosophy or an independent reality, and I have argued that even in epochal or dialectical history a present and a past conceptual framework can be synthesized without distorting historical objectivity.

But the introduction of a new idea to control ideas and actions, which had originally been conceived and carried out without benefit of that new idea, introduces a problem of a different sort. Once the Renaissance was named, and once it was studied as a rebirth, the concept of the Renaissance not only affected the interpretation and statement of historical facts of the 'Renaissance' but also made the preceding period a 'Middle Ages' during which actions, institutions, and thoughts were developed without consciousness of the fact, later apparent, that they were mediaeval. There are other new concepts, which are not merely names given to epochs or ages, and therefore adjusted to and controlled by the historical materials to which they are applied, but which are general organizing principles, like 'social system' or 'culture', developed during the last century or two and now applied to the study of historical materials to determine the characteristics of societies and cultures centuries or millennia ago.

The second question, like the first, is framed in the epochal mode of history, but the problem which it raises is a problem in all four forms of history. Let me illustrate ways in which the problems occur by considering the history of 'culture'. I serve on the Editorial Board of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. One of the functions of the Editors is to point out lacunae in the Encyclopaedia. Some years ago I called attention to the fact that there was no article in the work on culture. There was an article on 'Civilization and Culture' written by the historian James Harvey Robinson in 1929. He wrote about 'civilization' as a new word and about the revolutionary effect of the study of civilization, which
was not more than 50 or 60 years old. Culture was the accumulated product of the development of civilization. Robinson's article was retained in the Encyclopædia, but it was supplemented by an article on 'Concepts of Civilization and Culture', by the anthropologist David G. Mandelbaum. According to this article all tribes or societies have 'cultures', but civilization is a particular kind of culture. Both terms came into their current use in the eighteenth century. The two articles did not seem to the Editor to provide an exhaustive treatment of culture. I was therefore asked to do a third article on 'Culture and Humanity'. Its orientation, like the orientations of the other two, was modern, but it found the beginnings of the terms and the discussion of culture in antiquity and in speculation concerning paideia and cultus and cultura. The three articles are not controversially opposed; they treat different aspects of culture and different meanings of the word; the history of culture has different scope, contents, and a different relation to civilization in the three approaches.

Mr. Arieli suggests as answer to his third question that the different frameworks of different forms of history meet in historical action itself. I agree with him and I should like to use his answer to restate the distinction which I have made between facts and data. In my oral presentation I distinguished four stages from the data of common experience with which the historian begins to the ordered facts of historical accounts in which the problem of the direction of history is encountered for the first time. I distinguished these four steps in order to relate the four forms of history, which are distinct at the fourth stage, to the common beginning which they share. The first two steps have to do with common data and with selected data; the last two steps have to do with stated facts and with ordered facts. As I used the words, 'datum' and 'fact' have radically different meanings. A datum is something that can be designated or named; it is a simple, encountered immediately in experience; it is neither true nor false. A fact is what is signified by a true proposition. Philosophies of radically different kinds are in remarkable agreement concerning the relation of propositions and facts—that propositions are true or false, and that facts are signified by true propositions. In some philosophies there are atomic facts and atomic propositions, but in most philosophies facts are complexes. I have used the word 'data' to apply to the simples which are put together in a statement of 'fact'. Philosophers do not agree further about the nature of facts or of simples. In problematic philosophies, like Aristotle's, facts tend to be substances and their qualities and functions; and data are essences, properties, and accidents. In logistic philosophies, like Hobbes', facts tend to be occurrences understood according to their underlying physical laws; and data are bodies and their motions and reactions. The data of dialectical philosophies are appearances, and the facts are truths; the data of operational philosophies are impressions, and the facts are acts. For this reason I distinguished two stages in the treatment of data: the potentially infinite data of common experience and the selected data of directed inquiry; and there are two stages also in the treatment of facts: the formulation of facts in true propositions and the ordering of facts according to the methods of the four forms of history in the directions of history.

Mr. Spear asks particularly for an explanation of the sense of 'causal history'. Are not the characteristic distinctions of causal history made also by the other forms of history? In what sense is 'cause' used in causal history? What is its relation to the history of nature?

Mr. Spear is correct in his fundamental insight. The fact that I have called one form of history 'causal history' does not imply that the other forms of history do not treat causes and cannot distinguish between causes operative in science, philosophy, and history. The basic characteristic and the defining terms of each of the forms of history reappear in other meanings as subordinate considerations in the other forms. Causal history is history which seeks its facts in events which are ordered according to underlying laws of nature, or of cause and effect. Causal history therefore traces thin lines or chains of sequences rather than delineating large inclusive ages or communities, or specifying facts and problems and their solutions, or recounting acts of men or groups and their purposes and consequences. Political histories, economic histories, military histories are causal histories when they treat of a series of events selected from the rise and fall of a nation or a ruler in terms of the accumulation of political power and its employment, or the formation of economic powers of production and their direct consequences and indirect manifestations, or the development of armaments of aggression and defense and the use of strategic and tactical devices. Causal history is reductive: the history of culture is not omitted in political or economic histories, but it is treated in terms of the social, political and economic forces which enter into the determination of taste and the complex of values which in turn influence political and social institutions and economic production and distribution. The fun-
damental relations of politics, economics, or military strategy which
provide the laws of causal history may be treated in epochal, disciplin-
ary, or exemplary history but not in the thin lines of cause and effect
which characterize causal histories.

Perhaps the best way to indicate these relations and differences is by
means of the history of philosophy to which Mr. Spear made reference
in his questions. It is the characteristic of causal histories of philosophy
to trace the line by which philosophy once constituted the whole body
of sciences from which the sciences one by one were separated as they
attained scientific precision, while philosophy remained at each stage
the remnant of problems which were still unsolved or which had not
yet been treated by a scientific method. Bertrand Russell's History of
Western Philosophy is such a causal history of philosophy. This concep-
tion of the subject matter of philosophy and of its relation to the sci-
ences is not shared by any of the other forms of history. In disciplinary
histories of philosophy the sciences are separated from each other ac-
cording to differences of subject matter: and the basic problems, or the
problems of principles in every science, are philosophic. Mathematics
is one of the theoretic sciences, and the philosophy of mathematics has
had a continuous history, to which indeed Russell has made contribu-
tions. In epochal histories of philosophy, the evolution of philosophy
is not from a broad scope in the past to a narrow range of problems in
the present; it is a cycle, or an advance or a decline measured in terms
of ideas or ideals, not in terms of subject-matter covered or omitted. In
exemplary histories of philosophy, the evolution is in terms of perspec-
tives and orientations, of arts and skills subject to study and emulation;
the subject matter of mathematics might or might not be relevant to
the actions recounted.

Mr. Wahl has made many critical and witty observations concerning
my differentiation of four forms of history; but as he moved along in
his reflections, I have the impression that he agreed with me in the uses
to which I put the distinctions. He said that I was too analytic, but he
conceded that I made synthetic use of my analytic distinctions at the
end of my presentation. He argued that my analytic tendencies led me
to treat facts without connections, acts, or meanings. He agrees that
poetry is more universal and philosophic than history; he doubts
that philosophy is more philosophic than history, and I suspect that he
would doubt that history is more philosophic than philosophy. He
disbelieves in the simples which I find in the data from which history
begins; and he moves from the connections between facts and the con-
nexions within statements of facts, to question the simplicity of the
data from which statements of fact are composed. He notes that the
ages of epochal history are named and characterized after the event; he
is convinced that disciplinary history and exemplary history are not
history properly so called; he does not like ‘cause’ or ‘law’ as designa-
tions of causal history, but he is convinced that what I call causal history
is history in the true sense. He closes his reflections by returning to Mr.
Van Breda's question about the objectivity of history, and he gives point
to his question by the example of Koyre's work in the history of science
which is excellent history but is not, despite the approval which we
both expressed of causal history, an exercise in causal history but an
examination of scientific problems in the mode of disciplinary history.
These are all criticisms and reflections which I find very sympathetic,
for one makes distinctions to use them and Mr. Wahl has used my dis-
sinctions as I had hoped they would be used. To answer his criticisms
therefore would be to misunderstand them, and I must therefore an-
swer his questions on a lower plane by defending, somewhat pedanti-
cally, the distinctions which are the basis of our agreements.

Mr. Wahl is right. I have been analytic. I have distinguished four
kinds of history and four stages from the common data of immediate
experience to the ordered facts of historical discourse. This is an ana-
lytic schema constructed to distinguish the senses in which history may
be said to have a direction or a meaning. I arranged the distinctions in
a matrix to facilitate the analysis. But the use of such a matrix does not
hypostatize meanings, or make distinctions of sense into separations
of existence, or pigeonhole dynamic facts in static compartments. A
matrix does not function as a picture or map of a real world; it provides
a system of possible interpretations of what is under discussion and of
what is the case. The matrix I have been using is fourfold: history has
a different structure and ‘history’ a different meaning in each quadrant.
Among other things, each quadrant provides history with a different
direction and a different meaning. But since these are differences of
interpretation, each kind of history and what I have said about each
kind, may be interpreted in the meanings of the kind. A preference for
epochal history or for causal history may make all histories seem im-
perfect forms or approximations to the one history. Recognition of the
diversity of views men have had of ‘facts’ is in itself a contribution to
historical objectivity.
Poetry is more philosophical than history in the disciplinary history and problematic philosophy which Aristotle employed when he made the observation. But poetry and history are philosophy in epochal history and dialectical philosophy; concrete history is more philosophical than abstract philosophy in exemplary history and operational philosophy; and history is in no sense philosophy or comparable to philosophy in causal history and logistic philosophy. In much the same fashion the distinctions apply to the observation that ages are named after their occurrence, since the designation of ages and the sequence of their occurrence is proper to epochal history alone. Ideas of later ages are applied in the histories of earlier occurrences, but the narrative of history is not always an account of relations ordered in temporal sequences. My simples are analytic simples—the parts of sentences—and if they are conceived in this way they may be put to useful employments without arousing ontological fears in analysing history and its direction. ‘Randomness’ is of importance only in the perspectives of exemplary history, and since Jean Wahl has no belief in exemplary history, randomness need be of no concern to him.

Mr. Löwith, finally, returns to the question of direction and meaning in history. He says that my change of title from ‘the meaning of history’ to ‘the direction of history’ is without meaning or, if it has a meaning, it is impossible. This is true for dialectical epochal history. But, as I said in my oral presentation, I am not a dialectician. I expounded causal history in some detail in order to make clear a philosophic approach to history in which to talk about an objective meaning in historical occurrences, as dialecticians do, is nonsense. It is possible to indicate a motion, to measure it accurately and unambiguously, and to interpret it, so designated, in a variety of ways and give it a variety of meanings. There is a great difference between supposing that a freely falling body has a direction and successive positions and accelerations, and supposing that the motion has a meaning. A causal historian would be interested in presenting the successive interpretations which Galileo, Newton, and Clerk Maxwell gave to the phenomena of falling bodies, and in the account he would treat the meaning of ‘acceleration’, ‘mass’, ‘inertia’, ‘force’, and ‘energy’. I made the distinction between epochal and causal history because it seems to me important to include in the examination of the philosophy of history philosophies which give history a meaning and philosophies which do not. Neither position is nonsense. When I write intellectual history, however, I do not use either

Mr. Löwith reinforces his argument that direction implies meaning by analysing the temporal structure which he finds implicit in direction, for he argues that direction implies an end and a meaning. He quotes the passage in my paper in which I say, ‘The historical sequence is cumulative, and the historian of philosophy seeks to preserve and develop in history what was valid and efficacious in the contradictory philosophies of earlier antagonists. The tasks of philosophy and of the history of philosophy are fundamentally the same.’ The passage is my description of epochal histories of philosophy. It is true of epochal histories, but it is untrue and demonstrably false in other forms of the history of philosophy. In particular, the tasks of philosophy and the tasks of the history of philosophy are radically different in causal and disciplinary histories of philosophy. It is not true that a process which has an end has a meaning, or that all processes have unique and determinate ends. It is not true, even, that historical accounts are all or necessarily accounts of temporal sequences. There are disciplinary histories which are accounts of fact and function, problem and resolution, and in disciplinary history there are other meanings of ‘prior’ and ‘posterior’ than those derived from the temporal relations.

Mr. Löwith raises a second question concerning the pluralism of approaches which he reduces to a relativism. My pluralism is based on a pluralism of facts which are objective. It is a recognition that no finite account of an infinity of facts can be exhaustive. Mr. Löwith’s account of the meanings of history omit the facts which I find to be the matter of all history, and he omits other facts with meanings given them by philosophers whose principles and methods I do not accept. I can understand epochal histories, and I am content to read them according to the meanings they assign to statements and facts. My refusal to take them as unique and exhaustive accounts is a result, not of relativism, but of heuristic methods of inquiry adapted to search for historical facts in all the senses in which facts have occurred and have been recognized. The opposite of pluralism is not the presentation of one account or interpretation as necessarily true and inclusive. I cannot imagine what the true perspective of the history of philosophy is or could be. I have encountered a number of statements of the true perspective in the
course of the history of philosophy, but they have all turned out to be false or incomplete. The recognition of the regularity of the process by which certainties have become doubtful is not an argument for or a statement of relativism. Facts must be discovered; allegations of fact must be tested and controlled; the process of historical inquiry, even into facts long past, is continuous and open-ended. I hope that by the cooperation of scholars and philosophers we shall be able to construct more reliable and more comprehensive accounts of historical occurrence, and I hope that by devices such as we are now using we shall be able to establish communication among different approaches and turn from controversial oppositions to philosophic discussions in the philosophy of history.

Mr. Löwith's final question is concerning communication among philosophies of history and between history and philosophy. He states the question, however, by attributing to me a statement that philosophy and history are homogeneous. As I have already pointed out, this statement was part of my description of epochal history, and I do not hold it to be true in my own philosophy of history. In the final pages of my paper and in the final paragraphs of my oral presentation I discussed the present situation in philosophic semantics and in philosophic inquiry: semantically we are coming to recognize the plurality of meanings and approaches in philosophy; in philosophic inquiry it is necessary to commit oneself to one of the methods of philosophy distinguished in semantics, but it is possible that the tendency to philosophic opposition may yield to philosophic discussion and understanding of differences. That understanding of differences need not be a synthesis in the manner of a dialectical philosophy of history. My exposition of semantics and inquiry was in the disciplinary mode, but it could be restated in different terms and meanings in accordance with the epochal, causal, and exemplary forms of history.

I am convinced that there are true approaches to history, that there can be agreement on facts despite differences of method, and that there are ways of doing history which take into account the variety of ways of approaching and interpreting data and facts. If what I have said is correct, we must learn the semantics of the variety of meanings, and we must guide the methods of inquiry in ways that take into account other methods and their results. Philosophers and historians have been refuting each other since the beginnings of philosophy and of recorded history. We shall begin to listen to each other, not by translating state-ments into the errors that they would be if they were given the meanings we attach to words and facts, but by reconstructing their proper meanings. If, instead of opposing our positions in controversy, we used the opposed principles to which we adhere as hypotheses for the discovery of facts which might be supplemented by facts discovered by the opposed hypothesis, new progress could be made in the discovery and interpretation of historical facts. We shall not, I hope, carry our efforts to convert each other to our forms of thinking to the point of securing agreement on a single monolithic philosophy. Instead we shall concentrate on facts and relations of facts, rather than on intentions and imputed meanings, and we shall test other allegations of facts and, if they turn out to be facts, fit them into the facts we have established and interpreted; and we shall go on, as we have in the past, each writing his own mode of philosophy and his own form of history, but in a new fashion which may have a cumulative effect and contribute to the progress of truth without distortion of objective facts or departure from testable truths.